

APATHY TO ACTION: PROPHETIC PREACHING A CATALYST FOR
DEVELOPING COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CHURCHES
MOBILIZING MINISTRIES IN THE COMMUNITY

Reginald Tarpley

B.S., Southwestern Christian College, 1988
MSOL, Nyack Collage, 2008
M.Div., Howard University School of Divinity, 2010

Mentors

Bishop Rudolph W. McKissick, Jr., D.Min.
Harold A. Carter, Jr., D.Min.

A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
JUNE, 2012

**UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

**APATHY TO ACTION: PROPHETIC PREACHING A CATALYST FOR
DEVELOPING COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CHURCHES
MOBILIZING MINISTRIES IN THE COMMUNITY**

by

Reginald Tarpley

United Theological Seminary, 2012

Mentors

Bishop Rudolph McKissick, D.Min.

Harold Carter, Jr. D.Min.

Date: _____

Approved: _____

Faculty Mentors

Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	vii
EPIGRAPH.....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS.....	10
2. THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL.....	32
3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION.....	50
4. METHODOLOGY.....	128
5. FIELD EXPERIENCE.....	140
6. REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION.....	170
APPENDIX	
A. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE CITY OF ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND...	179
B. PRE/POST-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	182
C. LETTER OF MEMBER PARTICIPATION.....	186
D. BIBLE STUDY CONTEXT ASSOCIATES OBSERVATION FORM...	188

E. PROJECT COURSE SYLLABUS.....	190
F. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS BACKGROUND/ INFORMATION FORM.....	195
G. BIBLE STUDY LESSON SERIES OUTLINES.....	203
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	217

ABSTRACT

APATHY TO ACTION: PROPHETIC PREACHING A CATALYST FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CHURCHES MOBILIZING MINISTRIES IN THE COMMUNITY

by

Reginald Tarpley

United Theological Seminary, 2012

Mentors

Rudolph W. McKissick, Jr., D.Min.

Harold A. Carter, Jr., D.Min.

The goal of this project was to re-establish the perceived disconnect between the Black church and the community which greatly affects both institutions. It seeks to provide a model for how congregations can take action and meet the needs and interests of people in their local community. This project was designed to investigate the relationship between prophetic preaching and developing community-focused churches mobilizing ministries in the community. To triangulate this data; a qualitative pretest and posttest questionnaire was administered, Bible and sermons sessions were conducted to engage the church and community that will lead to spiritual and social transformation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has been an enormous project that owes its existence to the labor of many people: This project was inspired by, and lived out among, the people of Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church, in Annapolis, Maryland. Their support and enthusiasm for the project reflect their desire to become a community-focused church.

Heartfelt thanks to Mt. Calvary United Methodist Church for their prayers, encouragement, love and kindness showed me during this gruel yet rewarding doctoral program.

Without being remised, special thanks to mentors Bishop Rudolph W. McKissick, Jr. and Dr. Harold A. Carter, Jr. who have been most helpful, encouraging, and supporting throughout this D.Min. process. You both provided challenge to follow wherever the research leads. For that the writer is forever grateful. He is sincerely grateful to his professional associates Dr. Cain Hope Felder, Dr. Kenyatta R. Gilbert, and Dr. Darrell J. Wesley. These three have provided sources of inspiration and guiding light that made the path a lot clearer. They each had profound influence and impact on the writer's theological journey. Special thanks for their reflections on the manuscript and their lively conversation around key themes.

This project would have never come to fruition without the dedicated and persistent effort of my most immediate partners in this work; three lead contextual associates, Tamla Bias, Terri Bias, and Rena Hardin. They were absolutely phenomenal.

The writer is deeply grateful to contextual associates; Jacqueline Anderson, Cassandra Beans, Ann Belger, Agnes Chase, Betty Herold, Jeanie Howard, Muriel McPherson, Mary Molden, Esther and Kenya Snowden, Pat Whittington, and Lorraine Williams. Their dedication to the weekly Bible study and data gathering process was most valuable to the project.

Heartfelt appreciation to Gail Otis, a resident of the local community who is not a member of Cecil Memorial UMC who brought energy, laughter and honesty to the group discussions as she spoke openly and freely about her own apathetic outlook and experiences. Yet, she is to be commended for her desire to develop a new outlook for the less fortunate.

Finally, heartfelt and deep appreciation is extended to the Prophetic Preaching in the Black Church in the 21st Century cohort family especially peer consultants Darron D. McKinney, Sr., and Darrick A. Briscoe. It is my earnest prayer that our friendship will continue to flourish as we each sound the trumpet in Zion and reclaim the rich Prophetic Preaching Tradition in the 21st Century.

DEDICATIONS

This Doctor of Ministry Project to three very special women. First and foremost it is dedicated to the writer's loving and very supportive wife, Debbie Holland Tarpley whom God made just for him. Her love and encouragement has not only given him the strength to pursue his dreams, but more importantly to succeed. Secondly, to Mrs. Gloria (*Glory*) Alease Tarpley-Gaston (*beloved mother*), who always believed in him and never ceased from letting him know just how proud she was of him. Thirdly, to his sister, Joy Gaston-Gayles, Ph.D., the wind beneath his wings.

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position reached in life, as by the obstacles overcome while trying to Succeed.”

Booker T. Washington

ABBREVIATIONS

BWC	Baltimore Washington Conference
HUSD	Howard University School of Divinity
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
UMC	United Methodist Church

INTRODUCTION

We often speak of prophetic preaching as primarily speaking true to power and the powerful. The term conjures up images of angry figures like Amos and John the Baptist, denouncing sin and injustices of the powerful.¹ In an attempt to develop a working definition of prophetic preaching, the writer will consider the definition offered by Leonora T. Tisdale in her work entitled, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*. The definition reads:

The term prophetic usually refers either to preaching based on prophetic Biblical text that call people to live into God's vision for justice, peace, and equality in our world (such as those found in the Hebrew prophets or teachings of Jesus), or to preaching that addresses significant social issues and concerns. It is the kind of preaching that can "get ministers in trouble" with their congregations because it often goes against societal norms, pronouncing not only grace but also God's judgment on human action or inactions.²

Commenting on this definition in his book *Texts That Linger, Words That Explode:*

Listening to Prophetic Voices, Walter Brueggemann writes the following:

The prophetic voice is a mediating voice of God's activity to transform church and society in present-future sense based on the principle of justice. The prophetic voice speaks of divine intentionality—what God demands and expects of God's own human creation. The basic biblical feature of this discourse is that it opposes idolatry, particularly self-serving and self-deceiving ideologies. It refuses the temptation to absolutize the present; it drives towards a new, unsettling, unsettled future. It is a word that speaks to the predicament of human suffering from the perspective of God's justice. The speech, at all times, assumes a critical posture

¹J. Philip Wogaman, *Speaking The Truth In Love: Prophetic Preaching To A Broken World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 3.

²Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 3.

over and against established power. Last, the prophetic Word is a word of relentless hope.³

Yet, on the other hand, how often do we fail to speak truth to power to those who wield power in our sphere of influence? To add to this important point, the writer also believes that prophetic preaching is preaching that creatively speak-on behalf of others, of the injustices and inadequacies of the present and the hopeful possibilities of the future.

What is desperately lacking in this contemporary climate of preaching is a prophetic preaching voice. Such a voice does not dismiss the importance of the individual or personal experience to determine or interpret the meaning of the Gospel message. Wogaman in speaking *The Truth In Love: Prophetic Preaching To A Broken World* discusses the art of prophetic preaching. He suggests that, “One reaches for the deepest values, the ultimate loyalties, that bind us together as a community of faith. One seeks to express the faith—in God, in Christ, in scripture—in terms that will be recognizable to the congregation of familiar landmarks.”⁴ The point here is not to highlight any negative light on human experience to transform lives, but to elaborate that the prophetic preaching voice of the Black church remains the center for social change and political action for the Black community.

In the writer’s assessment, few institutions provide the united voice echoed by that of the Black church. The Black church was established because of the necessity to create a place of worship separate from whites, became significant as an organized body where opposition concerning the treatment of its parishioners could be voiced. It

³Walter Brueggemann, *Text That Linger, Words That Explode: Listening to Prophetic Voices* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 39-41.

⁴Wogaman, *Speaking The Truth In Love*, 78.

progressed from a place of spiritual healing, to one of social and political awareness, creating a litany of protest advocating rights afforded by the U. S. Constitution. The prophetic preaching voice of the Black church has been the flame bearer of the civil rights movement since it's beginning, and has played a prominent role in establishing a moral conscious for America.

What is the prophetic preaching voice of the Black church and why is it so critical to the vocation of the Black church and the health of our Black democracy? The writer takes the position that when the prophetic preaching voice of the Black church holds up a mirror to our nation misdeeds and imperfections, it stands tall with the biblical prophets (Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) of old, prophetically speaking truth to power against injustice while calling us back to God's word and His kingdom of harmony.

Kenyatta R. Gilbert has highlighted this connection between justice and speaking the truth to power. Gilbert contends that the common thread of all prophetic preaching is to recognition of injustice, and that the preacher will name injustice for what it is, and what justice should be. Thus, the prophetic witness is never imported; it is mediated, sent to, and worked out in community, not in isolation.⁵

The prophetic preaching voice of the Black church is rooted in the Black theological perspectives of love, justice, equality, and freedom. It articulates the rich history of Black resistance to racism and critical to the vocation of the Black church and the health of our Black democracy. According the Walter Brueggemann, "Moses did not

⁵Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 57.

engage in a struggle to transform a regime; rather, his concern was with consciousness that undergirded and made such a regime possible.”⁶

The twenty first century has succumbed to a brand of imperial Christianity that has left Christian churches in general and Black churches in particular with a sort of ecclesiastical paralysis. This debilitating reality is perhaps one of the causes for the pervasive pain that stays within Black communities across our country. History bears witness that Black churches were on the front lines fighting injustice and carrying the gospel message bequeath to disciples of Jesus Christ.

This gospel message made displaced and marginalized people its focused with its main mission “to set at liberty those who are bruised.” Yet the social gospel begun by Jesus and carried out by prophets like Sojourner Truth, Walter Rauschenbusch, Dorothy Day, Abraham Heschel, and Martin Luther King, Jr., has been eclipsed by priestly evangelicalism and prosperity gospel. Such unfortunate messages have unintentionally participated in the prolonged proliferation of social and economic displacement of vulnerable people.

Indeed, it was the legacy of Black churches that precipitated hope and healing for those living in its communities. Yet this legacy has been is a distant memory overcome by social amnesia. In an essay entitled “The Crises in Contemporary American Religion” Cornel laments this social amnesia and claims that such lost of existential memory precipitates a surrendering against the fight of social and political injustice. He notes:

American religious life-notwithstanding its vast philanthropic networks and impressive charitable record-lacks a substantive social consciousness. This is so because, like so much of American life, it suffers from social amnesia. American

⁶Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* ((Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 21.

religious people have little memory of or sense for collective struggle and communal combat.⁷

With the advent of a robust Black middle class comes a kind of comfort drawing attention away from horrible realities of poverty, incarceration, police brutality, drug addiction, prostitution and other social maladies that plague the Black community. As a result, the prophetic voices Black churches and Black preachers have been muted.

Cornel West argues that what has happened is an all out capitulation to what he calls in his book *Democracy Matters Constantinian Christianity*. West argues that the pervasiveness of the priestly tradition within Christianity is due to the rise of the religious right with its imperial impulses. These imperial impulses come out of the Constantinian tradition where the emperor Constantine instituted Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Though on the surface this institutionization seems to be a good thing for Christianity, West correctly argues that the Constantinian Christian paradigm and fervor took hold on Black Christians who now tend to embrace a more moralistic rather than a prophetic approach to Christianity and to Christian morality. He juxtaposes what he calls moralistic acts with moral actions. Moralistic acts, he argues:

Are often conflated with moral actions. Yet the former proceed from sheer sentimental concern—for example, pity—whereas the latter flow from an understanding of the larger context in which the action takes place and of the impact of the action on the problem. In short, moralistic acts rest upon a narrow, parochial anti-intellectualism that sees only pitiful individuals, whereas moral action is based on a broad, robust prophetism that highlights system social analysis of the circumstances under which tragic persons struggle. It is no accident that the moralistic, anti-intellectualistic forms of American religion thoroughly trash modernity and secularity, yet revel in the wonders of technology and in the comfortable living of modern prosperity.⁸

⁷Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas, 1999), 358.

⁸Ibid.

The comfortable living of modern prosperity blinds Black religious leaders from the discomfort experienced by hurting people. And it is this blindness that pales in comparison to the legacy of giants like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The goal of this project is to re-establish the perceived disconnect between the Black church and the local community, which has greatly affected both institutions. This endeavor is a call to action. It seeks to provide a model for how congregations can take action and meet the needs and interests of people in their local community.

This project is focuses on the context of Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church in Annapolis, Maryland. The church has become primarily a commuter-congregation, with minimal involvement in the life of the community. The researcher has observed a lack of a concrete and coordinated plan of action on behalf of the church due largely to a lack of interest and involvement. Arguably, the Black church is one of the most spirit-supporting communities for potential spiritual and social transformation. The researcher's chief concern is the derailment of the Black church from its traditional prophetic role and challenges it to return to that role.

Therefore, the hypothesis for this ministry project centered on if the congregation embraced prophetic preaching as a call to action, then the congregation will develop into a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local community. More precisely, prophetic preaching is effective in transforming a person's values and behaviors. It results in Christian compassion where one ministers to everyone regardless of race, religion, abilities, or circumstances.

Chapter one, *Ministry Focus*, explains how the researcher's life experiences and background have suitably prepared him to undertake this ministry project. The

researcher experienced a painful and problematic childhood. Through these anguishing experiences, the researcher contends that lip service is perhaps the greatest and most persistent impediment to Christian praxis. The researcher soon discovered that members of the church were simply not interested in helping his family. A vast majority of the congregation's membership had come into contact with that foul and ugly beast called apathy. Nevertheless, apathy or a simple lack of interest still constitutes perhaps the greatest impediment to developing a beloved community-focused church.

Chapter two, *The State of the Art in this Ministry Model*, examines relevant literature on the subject of how to develop a community-focused church. Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church future was frozen in the memories of the past. It was also a congregation caught in a collision of cultures. Authors and pastors Mike Slaughter, Adam Hamilton, Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro provided encouragement and assistance that helped the writer discover new possibilities for the church within the local community and increase the church's potential for prophetic Christian witness. The authors explore and suggest innovative approaches for: recovering the message and mission of Jesus, reclaiming the spiritual vitality of the church, reshaping the church's image to widen its appeal, using the past as a bridge to the future, developing ministries and programs reflecting community needs and other concerns.

Chapter three, *Theoretical Foundations*, provides the three theoretical foundations for the ministry focus for developing community-focused churches to mobilize ministries in their local community. The chapter is divided into three sections. The biblical foundation section gives an exegetical interpretation and analysis of the Old Testament

text Amos 5: 21-24 and the New Testament text Mark 6: 30-44. The historical foundation section focuses on the social activism movement of the Black church (the role of prophetic Christian witness in the Black church). Here the researcher will endeavor to argue that the Black church is one of the most spirit-supporting communities for potential spiritual and social transformation. The theological foundation section examines the social gospel movement and Black theology of liberation and its theological implications. The researcher will attempt to demonstrate that these theological implications come as a result of two critical figures, Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Martin L. King. It identifies one aspects of that implication as prophetic. The prophetic implication implies its social justice and socially transforming aspects.

Chapter four, *Methodology*, provides the research methodology for this ministry project. Methodology was implemented in four stages. The input stage involved participation from the context associates. This gave the context associates the opportunity to express their ideas concerning the project and make suggestions for the four-week Bible study series, entitled “Apathy To Action.” The informative session stage involved two important dynamics: a planning meeting with context associates and a meeting with elected city of Annapolis official, Ward 3 Alderman, the Honorable Classie Gillis Hoyle. The implementation strategy stage was very important for several reasons. In order to increase the attendance of not only members of the congregation, but members of the community as well, the church used every available form of publicity possible. The advertisements were deliberately intended to build a relationship between the church and the community. The invitation/insightful study stage includes a project course syllabus of Bible study series for the next four weeks.

Chapter five, *Field Experience*, records the journey and the results of the four-week project. This chapter gives the measurements and analysis from the sermon series questionnaires, pre and post-survey questionnaires, Bible study series lessons and feedback, and an exit interview, method of data collection, data analysis and validity data analysis.

Chapter six, *Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion*, chronicles areas of reflections, evaluations, and summary of this ministry project. This chapter explores what the researcher learned through the course of this project and offers suggestions for further study in this field. The researcher also discusses areas of personal and professional growth, as well as his faith development and spiritual formation. Supporting documentations for this project can be found in the appendix.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spiritual Journey

“People cannot find their missions until they know themselves”¹

Even if it is a painful endeavor, the process of sharing one’s life story becomes a therapeutic experience. Ann E. Streaty Wimberly suggests in her book, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* that African-Americans possess a yearning for liberation and vocation. She notes that:

Persons are in pursuit of liberation and hope-building vocation, or a way of being and acting in life that grants them a sense of positive relatedness to God, self, others, and all things. The quest for story and storytelling to bring relevance to Christian education is not surprising. Story is a powerful part of human existence. We humans live an evolving narrative, or story, that forms from the storied world around us. Life as a story is eventful. It is not static. Our lives have a past, a present, and a future in some place and in some circumstance.²

The writer’s spiritual journey commenced with his call to ministry. The writer first began preaching at the ripe age of fourteen. Unlike the Prophet Moses who received his call to ministry through a burning bush, or the Apostle Paul who saw a bright light shining from heaven, the writer is unable to recount the precise day, time and place of his call.

¹Laurie Beth Jones, *The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement For Work And For Life* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 1996), 26.

²Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 3.

However, on the other hand, even as a kid, the writer knew that preaching was in his blood and what he was meant to do. Consequently, when the writer began preaching, Sister Sylvia Stevenson, his Junior High School, Sunday School Bible class teacher gave him his initial ministerial training and Gerald Lee, the Minister of the East Capitol Street Church of Christ, mentored him. Minister Lee's mentoring included plenty of opportunities to preach, and he also provided an abundance of support and encouragement

The writer's spiritual development began with Minister Gerald Lee and Sister Sylvia Stevenson, who was the writer's first role models in ministry. The writer remembers those days clearly, as if it was yesterday, reflecting on attending Sunday morning worship services and listening to Minister Gerald Lee. The writer recalls sitting there on those church pews just glowing with respect and admiration for Minister Lee as his powerful voice, coupled with an abundance of charm and charisma moved everyone who was listening, especially the writer. The writer wanted to be just like him, and as a consequence, aspired to be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On the quest of spiritual development (faith), the writer often struggled to understand why the Lord would allow his mother, a God-fearing Christian woman to suffer with chronic mental illness from the time the writer was eight years old until her death on March 29, 2009. As a child, the writer recalls listening to the minister preach about God's love and mercy and God who could heal one's body and solve all their problems.

While sitting in the church pew, the writer would always ask himself, “Why would this loving and caring God allow his mother, with a genuine and unyielding faith in Him, to suffer such misery, despair, and pain?” If this God can heal our bodies, “Why wouldn’t He heal his mother so she could return home and be a normal mother—just like the mother of his friends?” All too often, fellow parishioners would quickly utter to the writer without hesitation, “With God all things are possible” and “You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.”

Through this anguishing experience, the writer contends that lip service is perhaps the greatest and most persistent impediment to Christian praxis. There was no real or relevant attempt by the church to contact the writer’s family or to visit their home or the writer’s mother in the mental hospital. The writer soon discovered that members of the church were simply not interested in helping his family.

A good majority of the congregation’s membership had come into contact with that foul and ugly beast called *apathy*. It was such a huge and frightening monster, and they were so tightly trapped in its clutches that they simply did not care enough to fight and find a way to assist the writer’s family. Nevertheless, apathy or a simple lack of interest still constitutes perhaps the greatest impediment to developing a beloved community-focused church.

During this time of struggle, anguish caused the writer to lose faith and trust in members of the Church of Christ who said they cared, but in reality were never there in the time of the writer’s mother’s crisis. It was at this pivotal point that the writer was brought to his knees to seek help from God.

If the test of faith seeking understanding is restlessly searching for deeper understanding and meaning to life struggles, then the writer maintains that his mother's battle with mental illness caused his faith to question and solicit answers in an attempt to facilitate greater understanding.

The Church of Christ's primary premise of faith contains little to no spirituality that positively affects its parishioner's action within the local community. The writer further asserts that the Church of Christ was so busy with what it was doing on the inside, on being inwardly focused, that it paid no attention at all to what was happening outside of the church.

For that reason, the writer is compelled to highlight the contemporary spiritual and social consequences of his religious tradition. Denominationally, the Church of Christ has a long tradition of practicing faith as a semi-way of life. As a faith institution it has developed more rituals of survival than rights of liberation. The Church of Christ has forgotten that the church as a place must always serve as a backdrop for the church as purpose.

Over time however, the writer had an intuition that something was seriously wrong with this kind of religion. The church was totally estranged from the local community. The church has failed miserably to connect with people in the community with the message of Jesus Christ through real and relevant acts of Christian service.

The emergence of the writer's faith makes the premise of the Church of Christ doctrine and religious teachings highly suspect. From the writer's perspective, the promise the false premise has created is, when you start from the wrong place, you are going to end up in the wrong place. There is no doubt about the negative impact the

writer's religious tradition has played on his faith. A key problem with the Church of Christ faith tradition is that it has not transformed to meet the need of society. The religious mindset of the Church of Christ is similar to church walls painted so thick on the inside that its members cannot hear the cry of human hurt or the despair that surrounds it on the outside. To transform is to foster change, healing, and reconciliation.

Transformation is necessary for growth and development. This is a serious misunderstanding of the nature of true faith in the Church of Christ community. No longer content or satisfied with the context of that type of religious tradition, the writer willingly probed and investigated the problems presented by this church community, resigned and became a minister of the United Methodist Church.

It was through prophetic preaching that the writer began to seriously embrace the notion that life should be viewed in terms of meaning and significance. This prophetic preaching infatuation served as an obliging motivator in the pursuit of graduate studies in preaching. Therefore, while a student at Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD) the writer enrolled in every preaching, homiletics, and prophetic preaching course available.

This would eventuate in a very valuable learning experience started as a spiritual and personal challenge. The writer's faith underwent serious alterations and adjustments. The writer credits graduate experience and seminary training as the beginning of a professional journey that ushered in an openness that brought about a new mission and vision in the writer's life and ministry.

The writer met Dr. Kenyatta Gilbert, Professor of Homiletics and Preaching at HUSD. Professor Gilbert helped the writer view past childhood experiences from a spiritual perspective. As a result of this difficult journey, the writer can honestly say that his faith in God reached an apex never reached before. The writer's faith soared beyond the perimeters of self and the narrow religious viewpoint of the Church of Christ. The writer began to view his ministry in terms of developing a community-focused church and not continuing the problematical cycling of an inwardly focused church. In this context, the issues of inequality, injustice, racial discrimination, and classism ceased from being merely sociological and political issues and became theological and philosophical.

In conclusion, the writer is certain that God has brought him to this place to empower people in the pursuit of excellence, to liberate His people, and to set the captives free. Every person, regardless of race, gender, or class is important to God. The writer is now privileged to participate in this Doctor of Ministry program that focuses on *Prophetic Preaching In The Black Church In The 21st Century*.

Throughout this ministry focus, the writer shares his story using a method of presentation that involved the writer's spiritual, theology of prophetic preaching, and professional development. With that hope, this testimonial presentation encourages those who read it and provides some insight regarding who the writer is as a person and as a pastor. In summary, this writer unequivocally answers the question, "Who am I?" by stating, "the writer knows in his heart, soul and spirit that he is standing among a 'great cloud of witnesses' who God has called to lead and feed His sheep."

Context of Ministry

Throughout the course of this chapter, an exploratory synopsis of Anne Arundel County, Maryland—particularly the City of Annapolis—will be provided. This document will describe the geographical, historical and social components of this region, many of which influenced the history of Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church, where the writer now serve as pastor. Furthermore, it will clarify how all these factors contribute to the writer's context of ministry

History of Anne Arundel County, Maryland

This is the story of a place with miles of waterfront where people live an enviable life often referred to as year-round vacation living. Anne Arundel County's Mid-Atlantic location is a key factor in its appeal. It has a population of 537,656 (July 2010 est.). Besides being the primary link between Maryland's most populous areas and the Chesapeake Bay, the county offers quick and easy access to Washington, D.C. (29 miles) and Baltimore (26 miles). Strategically located between the two cities, it is an integral part of the fourth largest market in the United States.

At the turn of the 21st century, Anne Arundel County celebrated its 350th anniversary. Her past, present, and future are linked, creating a vibrant economy, an exceptional quality of life, and an outlook that is revolutionary. All that Anne Arundel County has to offer cannot be captured within these few pages. What is presented here is an overview of the county and its diversity—in its people, attractions, and lifestyles.

A County Overview

In 1649, the revolutionary ideas of religious freedom brought the first settlers to Anne Arundel County.³ A group of Puritans from Virginia came to Maryland to settle on the north shore of the Severn River in an area called Providence. The county in which they settled was Anne Arundel, named in 1650 in honor of Lord Baltimore's young wife.⁴

Reportedly, passions ran high in the 1770s. In the autumn of 1774, Anne Arundel Countians held a *tea party* more spectacular than the famous Boston affair of the previous December.⁵ In Annapolis, angry citizens forced merchant Anthony Stewart to burn his ship, the *Peggy Stewart*, and the load of tea on which he had paid the hated tax. Local patriots rallied around another revolutionary cause when they joined the fight for independence in 1776.

For nine months at the end of the Revolutionary War, Annapolis was the capital of the new nation. In 1786, delegates meeting in Annapolis laid the groundwork for the 1787 convention in Philadelphia that resulted in the United States Constitution.⁶ Over the next two hundred years, the steamboat, railroad, and automobile revolutionized life and work in Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis.

³Jean Russo, "Economy of Anne Arundel County," in *Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, Maryland: A Study of Urban Development in a Tobacco Economy: 1649-1776*, ed. Lorena S. Walsh, N.E.H. Grant RS-20199-81-1955 (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives, 1983), appendix.

⁴Aubrey Land, ed., *Letters from America by William Eddis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), 18.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶United States Printing Office, S. DOC. 106-29 – "History Of The United States Capitol: A Chronicle Of Design, Construction, And Politics", www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/capitol/.

The City of Annapolis

Annapolis, the capital of Maryland and county seat of Anne Arundel County, with a population of 38,394 (2010 est.), has a very rich history of its own. The Algonquin and other Native American tribes occupied the region before the white settlers arrived. When Annapolis was settled in 1649, the Algonquin tribe was no longer in the area. Over time, due to its waterfront location, a thriving shipping industry, and successful slave trade, Annapolis became the political, social, cultural, and economic hub of Maryland

To be convinced that Annapolis is an ancient town, one does not have to consult the chronicles of history, nor even the wealth of tradition and folklore stories, which abound among the natives. These, to be sure, are interesting in their way. Few places in the country so easily allow you to step back in time as in Annapolis. Here past and present intertwine. At every turn are reminders of our heritage and traditions.

Annapolis has the greatest number of surviving 18th century buildings in the country; neither Boston nor Philadelphia can claim more. Among them are the homes of four Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Chase, Thomas Stone, William Paca, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the only Catholic to sign the document and the wealthiest American of his day. The immortal four lived and labored for the good of the newborn Giant of the West, surviving by six years all the other signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Another piece of historical architecture is the Maryland State House—the oldest in continuous legislative use in the United States. Construction began in 1772. However the Maryland legislature did not first meet there until 1779. The Maryland State House is where George Washington famously resigned as Commander in Chief of the

Continental Army on December 23, 1783 and where the Treaty of Paris was ratified on January 14, 1784, formally ending the Revolutionary War. It was during this period that Annapolis became the first peacetime capital of the United States.

Fast-forward to 1845 and the founding of the Naval School, now known as the U.S. Naval Academy. Located in the seat of Annapolis, the great Naval Academy of the nation very naturally becomes a focal point for the interest of every true American. Here, amid the glories of Maryland's charms, the future admirals of the American Navy are trained; and here, amid these selfsame charms, many past and present lights of our Navy were fitted for the service.

City of Annapolis in the 21st Century

Annapolis in the 21st Century has been designated a Central City by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Major components of the local economy are government (the State Capital, Anne Arundel County Seat, and the United States Naval Academy), tourism, and maritime industries. According to the Regional Planning Council, 32,350 persons were employed by industries in the City of Annapolis and the U.S. Naval Academy.

Government and institutions employed 17,850 including over 2,500 military and civilian personnel at the Naval Academy. Annapolis is the largest incorporated municipality in Anne Arundel County and is a full-service city. More than 4.5 million people visit Annapolis each year.⁷

⁷See Appendix A.

African-American Heritage In Annapolis and Anne Arundel County

African Americans have played an integral part in the physical and cultural landscape of Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis for over 350 years. Many were brought here during colonial times as slaves from West Africa and the Caribbean.⁸ Their number in Anne Arundel County once exceeded those of European Americans. Enslaved and, later, free African Americans worked on farms and in towns, at the U.S. Naval Academy, and in the maritime industry. They practiced various trades, set up businesses, built churches, supported schools, created communities, and served in wars. Following emancipation, they fought against persecution and Jim Crow laws.

The African-American story is one of hardship, courage, and resilience rooted in family, spiritual faith, and community. Their legacy endures in the City of Annapolis and continues to inspire us all. A growing number of African Americans changed the character of Annapolis:

- A twist of irony on a slave ship called the *Jenny*. In 1760 the slave ship *Jenny* arrived in Annapolis with slaves from Angola. While on the high seas, the ship survived an attack by a French privateer, because the captain armed the slaves who then helped save the ship. Ironically, upon reaching the harbor of Annapolis, these same slaves were sold. Dozens of slave ships carried thousands of African slaves to Anne Arundel County during the 17th and 18th centuries.
- The Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Memorial. The memorial consists of a four-piece sculpture grouping of Alex Haley reading to three children of diverse ethnicities. Haley, the father of the popular genealogy movement and author of the Pulitzer prize-winning novel *Roots*, traced his ancestry to Kunta Kinte, an enslaved African brought to Annapolis in 1767 aboard the ship, the *Lord Ligonier*, as part of a cargo of slaves.
- The Banneker-Douglass Museum, dedicated in 1984, was named after Benjamin Banneker, a Maryland native known as the “first African-American man of

⁸Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room, Chronicling American: Historic American Newspapers, www.loc.gov/rr/news/18th/104.html.

science,” and Frederick Douglass, born a Maryland slave, who later became a leader of the abolitionist movement.

- To the north of the state house is a monument of Thurgood Marshall, dedicated in 1996. Marshall became the first black justice of the United States Supreme Court and formerly was a Maryland lawyer who won many important civil rights cases.
- Michael Steele, Maryland’s first African-American Lt. Governor, in 2003 was sworn in at the State House in Annapolis.
- Asbury United Methodist Church, Annapolis’s oldest African American congregation. The Presiding Elder from 1838 to 1863 was Reverend Henry Price, a civic leader and businessman. His grandson, Daniel Hale Williams, who performed pioneering heart surgery in 1893, was the first black to head the Freedman’s Hospital in Washington, D.C. Asbury United Methodist Church is the mother congregation of the church where the writer serves as pastor, Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church.

History of Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church (Formerly Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church)

Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, often referred to as Asbury Mission and Little Mission, was established on Thursday, July 16, 1925, in Camp Parole by Reverend John J. Cecil (a retired minister of the former Washington Conference and a member of the Asbury Quarterly Conference of Annapolis). Asbury Methodist was the first Methodist Episcopal church in Camp Parole. Shortly after Reverend Cecil started his missionary journey, Reverend E. A. Love (Pastor of Asbury M. E. Church, Annapolis) took an interest in Reverend Cecil’s work and established a committee of five from Asbury Church (Reverend J. J. Cecil, Brother B.S. Holt, Sister Caroline Larkins, Sister Janie Sellman and Brother J. I. Brown) to survey the Camp Parole community to determine how many Methodist Episcopal people actually lived in Camp Parole. Reverend Cecil secured the use of the old canning house located at Gibraltar Street and West Street

to begin church services. For a period of time, due to the poor conditions of the old canning house, Little Mission was operated out of Reverend and Mrs. Cecil's home.

On August 2, 1925, with the help of Mrs. Annie B. Cecil (wife of Reverend Cecil), the Sunday School (consisting of two members—Madeline Nater and Charles Neal) was started. Mrs. Susie Carr Love (mother of Reverend Love), Brother Joseph I. Brown, Brother Richard Sembly, Sister Annie Sembly, Sister Harriet Neal, and Sister Elizabeth Phillips were instrumental in the success of the Sunday School, which grew faster than the actual church membership. Reverend Love as the first Sunday School Superintendent appointed Mrs. Cecil, a position she held until 1937 when Brother James A. Wells was selected to succeed her.

On May 28, 1926, Mr. Joseph I. Brown secured a new location for church services, a former poolroom located at the corner of Parole Street and West Street. It was also in 1926 that Reverend Love and Reverend Julius S. Carroll, District Superintendent, thought the Mission (with two members—Sister Annie Sembly and Brother Richard Sembly along with Reverend and Mrs. Cecil) should be set apart from Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, Annapolis and become an independent church. Shortly thereafter the first Trustee Board was created, consisting of Reverend Cecil, Brother Charles Larkins, Brother W. E. Fletcher, Brother John Neal, and Brother Joseph I. Brown—all members of Asbury, except for Brother Neal.

The strong leadership of the church and commitment and dedication to the Camp Parole community allowed the church to flourish. The small congregation purchased a sixty-foot lot located on Parole Street and an old school house that was moved in sections to the Parole Street property. In 1931 the cornerstone for the church was laid. At this time

Little Mission had thirty-one members; in 1936 Little Mission was put on the Town Neck Charge, and in 1937 it was made a Station Charge. In 1938 membership of the church began to increase as did the church's financial condition begin to improve.

In 1940 the Women's Society of Christian Service (W.S.C.S.) was formed with Sister Augustine Wells as the first President. Beginning in 1947 the church made great strides with the creation of Senior and Junior Choirs, Methodist Men, Usher Board, Young People's and Children's Class, Vacation Bible School, and a Church School Board of Education. This period marked the beginning of the growth and development of the church, none of which would have been possible without the strong leadership of the pastors.

Due to the strong leadership, and commitment and dedication of the members, Cecil was a community-focused church with a strong loyalty and sense of obligation to the Parole community. Cecil was so committed to the well-being of the community that Parole Elementary School and the Parole Health Center operated out of the church buildings. Community pride was important, so what happened?

One notable change to the church occurred in 1968, when the Methodist Churches merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, forming the United Methodist Church. Consequently, Cecil Memorial Church joined other Methodist Churches in the insertion in the word United to their church name. As a result of this merger, the church became governed by the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

The Book of Discipline is a compilation of the laws and doctrines of the church, a mandate from the Conference outlining the what, when, where, and how of Church Physicians Consultants operations. The Conference also became the owner of all church

assets, which seems to have resulted in a loss of pride in, and sense of ownership of, the church.

In looking at the written history or pictorial story of the church and listening to members reminisce about back in the day, it appears that prior to Cecil becoming United Methodist members felt empowered to run the church. However, after the merger the members seemed to have stepped back and allowed the rules of the Discipline and policies of the Conference to dictate what the church can and will do.

Unfortunately, the days of week-long outdoor revivals and all day Camp Meetings have given way to microwave or drive through church services, with members watching the clock to ensure the pastor doesn't preach too long or the choir doesn't sing too long, making sure the Order of Service is the same every Sunday, the Lord's Supper is served the same every first Sunday, and watching to make sure everyone is following the Discipline. We seem to have become so embedded in the rituals and conservative traditions of the United Methodist denomination that we have forgotten how to truly and freely praise and worship God. Church has become more of an act or performance, with everyone following the same script, no ad-libbing allowed.

If we were to travel back to 1925, we would see that the members of the church and the members of the community were one and the same. However, that is not the case in 2012. Over time as members have moved out of the Parole community to attend college or to take jobs in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and other major metropolitan areas, many have also left the church.

Today, although the majority of the members of Cecil have roots in the Parole community, only a small percentage of the members actually live in the Parole

community. We have now become a commuter church—drive in on Sunday mornings for service then leave and not return until the next Sunday, thereby resulting in a deteriorating relationship and commitment to the Parole community.

Synergy

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1: 6-7 KJV).

In the following pages, the writer shares the general context of ministry in order to shed a bit of light on some of the opposition and/or resistance presented by this context. Furthermore, this background will not only assist the reader in understanding the concerns and challenges presented by this context of ministry, but more importantly to grasp the scope of this project.

The first few pages, which are devoted to a discussion of the general context, provides a framework for the reader’s understanding of the specific context of ministry here in Annapolis, Maryland. Next, the writer will discuss the relevant aspects of the United Methodist Church (UMC) and its mission statement as it relates to the ministry here at Cecil Memorial UMC. The writer will identify several existing problems that impeded the development of a community-focused church to mobilize ministry in the local community. In this doctoral project the writer will conclude by assessing the strengths and the weaknesses of Cecil Memorial UMC, the context ministry, and how certain needs can be addressed and met

In 2001, The United Methodist Church began declaring to the world that our hearts, our minds, and our doors are open. On the other hand, in the opinion of the writer, open can no longer remain an adjective. To have an effective impact in developing a

community-focused church, it must become a verb that challenges the United Methodist Church to open hearts, open minds, and open doors. No one would argue that Christians should not serve. However, in the writer's viewpoint, service is and should be the identifying mark of Christians and the church.

The writer's question about the relationship between the church and the community was the starting point for this project. Over the past two decades, Cecil Memorial UMC became more marginalized and less influential in the Parole community. There are several reasons for this, but two stand out. As noted earlier, the writer was appointed to serve as pastor by the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church in the fall of 2011. The context associates were assembled in the fall of 2011. They are the principal eyewitnesses to what occurred in the church. The following section echoes their words.

First, they recounted, "The sermons were not compelling, nor challenging the congregation to actively participate in selfless demonstrations of love and acts of service in the community." The writer wholeheartedly believes that as a rule, one of the most effective ways the church can connect people in the community with the message of Jesus Christ today is through real and relevant acts of service. Compassionate acts of service can restore the credibility of Cecil Memorial UMC in the Parole community

In addition, the congregation had often discussed plans to re-establish a bond within the community. According to the context associates, talks about opportunities for outreach ministries in the Parole community were the hot topic of discussion. Reportedly, a vast majority of the membership agreed that the congregation should be willing to step outside the four walls of the church building. Their intent was to step outside the safety

net of their church and finally cross the street into the real life of the Parole community with acts of Christian service. However, two items undoubtedly exposed the truth about their intentions: their calendars and their checkbooks. In others words, they have other things to do and interested in other things to purchase. Because the congregation was not engaged in the community with the good works and good news of Jesus Christ, those things for which they staffed and budgeted reflected it. The bulk of the congregation's expenditures was budgeted internally, to benefit their parishioners instead of externally focused to benefit the people in the Parole community.

The second problem that plagues the Cecil Memorial UMC is the estrangement between good deeds in the community and good news in the church. Because of failing to couple good news with good deeds, the congregation failed to make a significant impact within the Parole community. Without a concrete coordinated plan of action, the community perceives Cecil Memorial UMC as lacking of interest and involvement. It is the writer's position that good deeds validate the good news. Engaging the community with good news and good deeds is not just a tactic; it is the very core of the church. Therefore, the writer has concluded that a church is really not a true church if it's not actively engaged in the life of the community through ministry and service to others.

The third problem with the Cecil Memorial UMC is the parishioners have emotionally and physically withdrawn themselves from the Parole community. Many members actually find the Parole community puzzling. Whereas Cecil Memorial UMC may once have been the center of the community, now the church has become primarily a commuter congregation, with minimal involvement in the life of the community. Less than 30% percent of its members live within a ten-minute drive to the church. And over

70% percent of the congregation lives more than thirty to forty-five minutes away. That geographic dispersion is part of the difficulty this church has in making demands on the time and resources of its members. They are busy professionals living at some distance from the church and not eager to come for ministries, meetings, programs or activities except on Sunday morning. Almost everyone the writer interviewed said they did not know much about who was now living in the community. They said were pretty sure that the neighbors were different from themselves and had different needs and they were not quite sure what those needs might be.

As the writer enumerates the problems within the context, it should be duly noted that they are not in any order of significance. First, Christian apathy, in the researcher's opinion, is becoming more and more rampant and relevant not only in the writer's context, but also in many of the United Methodist Churches within the Baltimore-Washington Conference. What is Christian apathy? The definition is simple. It is the mindset of, *I don't care*. It is caring little to nothing about others or what God desires of us. And, as a result, in the writer's estimation many United Methodist Churches within the Baltimore-Washington Conference have become lukewarm, noncommittal, and disinterested in their local communities. Christian apathy has hindered the willingness of the so-called saint to move forward in spiritual formation. Perhaps fear of what may lie ahead or a lack of trust in God has discouraged others saints from doing so also.

As one can see, the writer has some serious church issues to confront. During the writer's brief tenure as pastor, the writer set out to conquer each problem with zeal and tenacity. However, we may as well face the facts right up front: there is no such thing as a perfect church. The perfect church is a figment of our imagination. In addition, if by

some miracle one were actually to stumble upon the perfect church and join it, then it still would not be perfect anymore because individuals as members are not perfect. Every church is imperfect because it's made up of imperfect people who will produce imperfect results. Nevertheless, the writer must also consider the congregation's weaknesses as well as their strengths in order to present a paradigm for deliberate change consciously. Three weaknesses and one key strength came to mind when the writer took inventory.

Weaknesses

1. The lack of a full-time pastor in the writer's opinion has contributed greatly to the lack of concentrated outreach missions and ministries. In the 87 years of Cecil Memorial UMC's existence, the congregation has never secured the services of a full-time pastor. The congregation has had part-time ministers, literally just Sunday morning preachers, who were employed full-time in secular occupations. In the writer's viewpoint, this may be a main factor in why the congregation is not involved in the life of the community in ways that carry forth the mission of Christ. It should be noted that the writer was also hired on a part-time basis to be the congregation's pastor. However, due to a strong sense of duty and commitment to the cause of Christ, the writer has dedicated himself full-time to the work at Cecil Memorial UMC. Those duties include maintaining office hours, completing administrative tasks, providing pastoral counseling, visitation of sick and shut-in members, teaching mid-week Bible classes, and providing church and organizational leadership. The list of pastoral responsibilities is endless.
2. Cecil Memorial UMC is a very tradition-bound and inward-focused congregation. There is a fairly thick inner culture, but it is an unwritten one. A person finds out what the unwritten rules are by breaking them. This also serves to establish who is an insider and who is an outsider. It is not easy to become an insider. Often that requires being part of a prominent family that has been in the congregation for a very long time. In the words of author Anthony B. Robinson, "The image of the church is a recliner, for it only exists to provide a comfortable and congenial experience for the members."⁹ From the writer's perceptive, this is where the core purpose of the church has been displaced. Rather than focusing on transforming lives, the purpose of the congregation has become satisfying the members.

⁹Anthony B. Robinson, *Leadership for Vital Congregations* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 60.

3. Change is not easily welcomed and often shunned at Cecil Memorial UMC. Change, of course, is a huge subject. Changing the apathetic mindset and outlook of the congregation in order to find a signature mission and significant outreach ministry in the Parole community has proven to be a most difficult task for the writer. The response often so quickly uttered by several of the members when challenged to become more community-focused in our mission and ministries is, “We don’t know those people.” The result: members chose instead to maintain their present congregational identity of being apathetic and uninterested. However, the writer deeply believes that Christians must act like the family of God we claim to be, which means learning to serve people who are different, and it also requires looking for new ways to get to know our community and be of service. As we endeavor to become a community-conscious church, to redirect our focus more intentionally outward, it will mean change. It will take a church-wide effort on Cecil Memorial UMC’s part to focus on others and not on themselves.

Strength

When considering the strength of Cecil Memorial UMC, the writer can attest that the worship experience is phenomenal. Among many striking features about the worship service, the praise and worship, praying, liturgical praise dancers, and the music ministry impressed the researcher the most. The choirs and the musicians’ sing and play with such passion and enthusiasm that they immediately ushers in the Holy Spirit and transform the service into a high-praise, hallelujah, Holy Ghost-filled worship service.

Summary

In conclusion, in this chapter the writer has carefully and prayerfully considered and described the concerns and challenges presented by this context. The writer has discussed and shed some light on part of the opposition and/or resistance presented by this context. The writer has noted how few United Methodist Churches would say they are not interested in making a difference in their communities and perhaps should be displaying a going out of business sign. However, the writer takes the position that

United Methodist Churches should be looking for creative, exciting, authentic ways to produce missions and to birth ministries in their communities for the Kingdom of God. And finally, the writer has identified how this project is designed in such a way that it emphasizes *spiritual* and *social* transformation as bases for developing a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community. It is only when the church mixes into the very life of the community that it can be an effective force for change.

The goal of the project is for church to become one of the defining assets in the Parole community, not just one of the liabilities that exist in the community. The writer contends that when Cecil Memorial UMC members change the way they conduct ministry, they will begin to change the image of the church in the local community.

In the next chapter the writer will provide a literature review probing the components and/or tenets of pastoral preaching, prosperity preaching, and prophetic preaching. In essence, the writer will attempt to prove why prophetic preaching over and above the other two models of preaching is the preferred model for developing a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community. In addition, the writer will examine four models of churches that mobilized the strength of their congregations in developing community social ministries.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

This section, drawn from four main resources, is an exploration of the model pertinent to the project. These models give voice to the perception and commitments of local pastors and church leaders who have mobilized the strength of their congregations in developing social ministries in their communities. It will elaborate on what other pastors have written about on the subject of developing a community-focused church and how this information proved beneficial.

The first resource model is by Mike Slaughter, Senior Pastor of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio and author of *Change The World: Recovering The Message And Mission Of Jesus*. In this meaningful piece, Slaughter assertively claims that, “The church described in the book of Acts (notice that the book is named Acts and not Doctrines) was continually moving beyond all institutional walls and doctrines to faithfully demonstrate the good news of the Kingdom.”¹ The effects of this claim within the particular context of God are radical. Slaughter argues that, “Many of us in the church seek out places of worship that tend to embrace our personal persuasions, excluding from true fellowship anyone with whom we don’t see eye to eye. This spirit of

¹Mike Slaughter, *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus* (Nashville, TN; Abingdon Press, 2010), 4.

disdain and exclusion prevents many outsiders from experiencing the resurrected Christ and drives some seekers from church.”²

To support his claim, Slaughter identifies four guidelines for developing social ministries and shows how their ministries are virtually always a natural expression of their Christian faith. The first guideline is, *An Inclusive God*. Slaughter notes in this guideline that:

Our Father who art...” These words contain possibly the most revolutionary understanding about God that Jesus brought into the world. God is our Father! God is not exclusive to one tribe or nation, but God is Father of all nations, tribes, and people on the earth. It is significant that on the day of Pentecost (the birthday of the church), the spirit of God was not given until God-fearing people were gathered from “every nation under heaven” (see Act 2). The list is truly amazing in its inclusivity. God was even inclusive in language. Everyone present heard the word in his or her native tongue. None was left out.³

Slaughter’s argument is simple. If God is our Father and the God of love, then how can the church be unloving, mean-spirited, internally focused, and exclusive?⁴ It is truly amazing how difficult it can be to overcome cultural and religious prejudices and practices in order to demonstrate the love of God.

In Slaughter’s second guideline, *The Royal Law*, he maintains that the epistle of James is practical and straightforward: “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers” (Jas 2: 8-9).⁵ This is an alarming and racial claim that Slaughter offers, albeit an important one.

²Ibid., 28.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

He claim that Christians did not take seriously the possibility that God was not pleased with the inadequate faith of people who focus on loving God but forget about loving their fellow man. The strength of Slaughter's claim becomes most apparent in his critical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He argues that:

The question, who is my neighbor that I am supposed to love as myself? A great question, and it has been asked before. Jesus told another simple story to demonstrate the most profound reality of loving God and neighbor. James's phrase – 'the royal law found in Scripture'—refers to the law of the King, or the law belonging to the King. The religious Jews in the first century were committed to the keeping of more than six hundred commandments. Jesus summarized all these duties in one: 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (Jn 13: 34-35). The love of God is not an emotion but a choice. God has created us as relational beings. We are must to live in trusting relationships of health and fidelity with God and one another.⁶

Slaughter is not merely offering some form crude theological objection. He is simply affirming we love and serve God as we love and serve each other. Jesus Christ, the ultimate authority, mandate the church to step out by faith and take action in places/areas of great pain and need.

In Slaughter's third guideline, *God of Grace*, he prepares to examine the philosophy that "God is the God of another chance." Slaughter boldly directs one to "Look at God's list of "who's who" in the Bible. Most folk are not there because they were heroic and did the right thing. They were screwups! Moses had anger management problems that resulted in manslaughter. David had a sexual obsession that led to the order of a Mafioso-style hit on one of his officers. The Bible is not a book about righteous people who serve as heroic examples; it is about a gracious God who

⁶Ibid.

uses us in spite of our brokenness and never lets go until we become who God created us to be.”⁷

Slaughter acknowledges the difficult to living in the paradox of grace and truth and he is more than aware of this criticisms Evelyn. He cites, “One of the biggest issues of inclusion that the church faces today is the issue of homosexuality. The controversy is not going to go away, and the church needs to be involved in healing and loving ways with our sons and daughters, friends and neighbors, mothers and fathers who are gay and lesbian.”⁸

Slaughter’s point remains optimistic despite the impartial observation and the fact that lesbian and gay Christians have not been accepted in, and in fact excluded from, many Christian communities of faith. Slaughter’s opinion is clearly in opposition, instead, he believes that self-righteousness results in a spiritual blindness that makes us oblivious to our own brokenness and magnifies the failures of others in our eyes.⁹ Slaughter further states that, “Righteousness is not an earned status. It is the result of God’s redemptive work in the cross. When we judge others people, we demean the redemptive work of Jesus and make it our own.”¹⁰

Slaughter’s fourth and final guideline is, *God of Truth*. Despite the overall positive aspect that the good news of the gospel reflecting God’s true identity, Slaughter argues that when the good news turn the gospel into one of subtraction and our experience of God through the church becomes one of rigid rules, irrelevant rituals, and

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

judgmental condemnation, there is a danger of going to the opposite extreme of exclusion. Judgment is exclusive and gives one a smug sense of satisfaction over another's failures (I told you so!).¹¹

Significantly, he writes more reticent about the merits of discernment. Slaughter maintains that discernment creates empathetic pain that leads first to compassion and then to intercession. The spirit of discernment connects one to the heart and patience of God, who is not "wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pt 3:9).¹² While this section is a very valuable resource for understanding how a church relates to the community in which it resides. The section of the book that proved to be the most valuable in regards to this model is the following section, entitled, "*Mission VS Mortar*."

In chapter six, Slaughter discusses *Mission VS. Mortar*. In it he argues that the word *church* is generally understood as a building: "We are looking for a church to get married in." In his argument, Slaughter maintains that there are no significant references to church building for the first two hundred years of the church's existence. The Greek word *ecclesia* (church) refers to a summoned or called-forth group of people.¹³ This point is quite crucial as it is essential that a clear distinction between God's concept of the word church and that of society. The word, as it described the church, was referring to the community that Jesus summoned forth to bear witness to the gospel and serve Jesus' mission in the world.¹⁴

¹¹Ibid.

¹²bid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

Slaughter believes that a clear vision and prayerful strategic planning must necessarily precede the budgeting process. Therefore, he suggested that a strategic budget should be built around the three areas of mortar, ministry, and mission.

- a. *Mortar*. This section of the church budget represents capital expenditures. The line items in this section should include all monies allocated for facilities, including facility personnel, facility upkeep, and general facility purchases, and facility debt reduction.
- b. *Ministry*. Discipleship expenditures comprise section of the church budget. It includes all children, teen, and adult program line items and curriculum resources. Ministry expenditures consist of the resources focused within the walls of the church and extends to disciple missionaries who will minister outside the walls of the church.
- c. *Mission*. This section of the church budget represents ministries benefiting those outside the walls of the church. It includes any denominational contributions or apportionments that the local church might be in covenant to pay; as well as missionary support, staff salaries that are dedicated to external mission, outside initiatives like food pantries, counseling centers, clothing ministries, emergency relief work, community partnerships, and global initiatives.¹⁵

Slaughter challenges pastors, the leaders of the church to commit to ensuring that ministry and mission are not sacrificed on the altar of mortar. This chapter resonated with the writer. Cecil Memorial UMC's annual budget was 85% mortar, 10% mission (all in apportionments to the BWC) and 5% ministry.

The second resource model is by Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. His body of work is entitled, *Leading Beyond The Walls: Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched*. In the opening chapter, Hamilton declares the intent of the book, stating, "The purpose of this book is to encourage effective leadership in the local church, which in turn will

¹⁵Ibid.

develop dynamic congregations.¹⁶ As noted in this statement of purpose, pastors play a critical role in the leadership and success of the church. According to Hamilton,

The etymology of the word *pastor* comes from the Latin, from which our word *pasture* also comes. It meant to feed and was usually applied to one who took care of animals, particularly sheep. And thus its connection to the word *shepherd*, a word that appears frequently throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament we learn that God is a shepherd to Israel—tending the Israelite people, providing for them, guiding them, and protecting them. Clearly, shepherd-leaders are important in accomplishing God’s purpose in the world, not only in ancient Israel, but to the present day. God can work in amazing ways, but often God’s mighty acts are accomplished through leaders, who are willing to act as God’s shepherds.¹⁷

Consistent with the most common and resonating image of leadership in scripture, the shepherd and his sheep, the writer contends that the shepherd is altogether a beautiful image and powerful image. It speaks one who faithful leads and cares for others.

Hamilton argues that shepherds go to where the sheep are to develop relationships with sheep, both those in our flock and those who are lost. Thus pastors are to go into the community, get to know, and build relationships with unchurched people and caring for those who are hurting.¹⁸ The writer squarely agrees with Hamilton. True authentic leadership is not just about the leader, it is about positive interactions and building health relationships with a group.

In chapter two, *Three Questions You Must Answer* Hamilton raises the following questions: (1) Why do people need Christ? (2) Why do people need the church? (3) Why

¹⁶Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond The Walls: Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 15.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

do they need this particular church? He claims that without an answer a church will flounder, and without deep conviction about the responses to these questions, a pastor will never lead a congregation to change the world.¹⁹

- a. *Why Do People Need Christ?* This question strikes at the very heart of Christian faith. Hamilton points out that our perception of who Jesus is will determine, in large part, how we answer those questions. He further contends that the New Testament offers us multiple of portraits of Jesus that, together, help us understand his identity. He is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the Good Shepherd, the Savior who lays down his life for the sins of the world, He is the Resurrected Lord, He is the image of the invisible God and the Word made flesh, He is the way, the truth, and the life.²⁰ Hamilton's point is clear. Too often Christians only articulate a biblical picture of Christology, and cannot answer this question until they consider human need and human suffering. The deepest problems facing our society are, at the core, spiritual problems.²¹ Hamilton insists that Jesus Christ is the solution to the deepest longing of the human heart. He is the answer to the most serious problems that plague our society. When Jesus is Lord and the Holy Spirit enters the heart of the believer, we find the empty places filled, and the dark sides of our souls transformed.²² The writer contends that we need Jesus in their local community because without him they will continue to live unfulfilling lives and fall short of their God-given destiny.
- b. *Why Do People Need the Church?* Hamilton seems to be aware that there are many in our society who would say that they "believe in" Jesus, yet they simply do not see the need for "organized religion." They say that they can worship "in their own way" without being connected to a church.²³ His emphasis was precisely on a world where such views are prevalent; pastors and church leaders must possess certain fundamental convictions about the absolute necessity of the Church if they are going to lead the Church and others to Christ. Hamilton offers six (6) fundamental convictions about the Church:

1. *The Church As the Continuing Incarnation of Jesus in the World.* The Church is the vehicle of God's saving and transforming work in the world.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

2. *The Church Is The Temple of the Holy Spirit.* It is when the believers were gathered and praying with one another that the Holy Spirit descended upon them.
 3. *The Bible Commands Us to Meet Together to Encourage One Another.* The Bible specifically direct us to gather together. This is in line with the words of Hebrews 10: 24-25: “And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deed, not neglecting to meet together, as it is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” The entire New Testament presupposes that Christians will live out their faith in community.
 4. *Christians Can Accomplish Far More Together Than They Can Apart.* The work of Christ can never reach its true potential when individual Christians try it alone. Furthermore, the Church fosters the good intentions of individuals and propels them into action.
 5. *Each Believer Is Gifted by the Holy Spirit for Work in the Church.* The Bible teaches that each person given certain gifts or abilities by the Holy Spirit when they become a Christian. Part of being a Christian includes using the gifts God has given each of us to build up other in the Church.
 6. *The Church Is Essential for Becoming a Deeply Committed Christian.* No one will ever realize their full Christian potential while being estranged from the Church. It is in worship, fellowship, discipleship, and service that we grow and become the people God longs for us to be. Growing in Christ in all of these ways is best accomplished within the context of the Church.
- c. *Why Do People Need This Particular Church?* Finally, Hamilton provides an interesting argument in the debate about whether or not mainline denominational churches can simply open their doors and assume that all members of that community of that denomination are going to attend. His position is that the only church where this still works, and even then only in a diminished way, is the Roman Catholic Church, where brand loyalty is still very high.²⁴ Hamilton’s argument is not only poignant but utterly convincing as well. Cecil Memorial UMC is mostly comprised of 2nd and 3rd generations Christians. It extremely rare that any visitor that attends our worship service is actually a member of the United Methodist Church. In order to combat this problem, Hamilton suggests that, “regardless of how small or large the church membership, the church must strive to excel in some area.”²⁵ He further suggested that, “regardless of a church’s size, each should choose to excel at certain things that its congregation

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

members can be proud of, and that are attractive to newcomers or the unchurched in the community.”²⁶

It goes without saying that this book proved to be a very valuable tool in developing a community-focused church that will seek to meet the needs of the unchurched in the local community. Hamilton’s boldness mirrors the radical ministry of Jesus in that Jesus constantly argued that people should be ministered unto in the physical context of their crisis.

The third resource model is *Reclaiming What Was Lost: Recovering Spiritual Vitality in the Mainline Church*, written by Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, Senior Pastor of Hope United Methodist Church in Detroit, Michigan. One of Stewart’s grave concerns that Mainline Protestant churches have lost their spiritual vitality. He is pleads for spiritual renewal and he suggests that, “The answer to revitalization can be found within many of the extant traditions of those churches. For spiritual reclaim the spiritual vitality and strengthen the spiritual renewal in mainline churches. To occur, mainline churches must go back to the basics by emphasizing models of spiritual renewal and open themselves to the power of spiritual transformation that meet the practical and social needs of people and by developing styles and modes of ministry that are both contextually and culturally relevant.”²⁷

Stewart III highlights eleven basic principles or steps that will reclaim the spiritual vitality and strengthen the spiritual renewal in mainline churches. The writer wishes to focus on two of those basic principles; *Reclaiming the Purpose of the Church*

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *Reclaiming What Was Lost: Recovering Spiritual Vitality in the Mainline Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 13-19.

and Reclaiming the Mission of the Church. In chapter eight, *Reclaiming the Purpose of the Church*, Stewart III highlights that the purpose of the church and the image of the church are perpetually connected. He argues that how we imagine our church will largely shape our understanding of the church's purpose and the church's purpose will help in turn shape its own image.²⁸

One potential danger in this theory, according to Stewart III is, often a culture of narcissism prevails in the church, where the church seems more concerned with looking inward and tending to denominational structures then looking outward and developing community-based programs for the empowerment of and service to others.²⁹ Stewart III declares what he considers as the four points of reclaiming the purpose of the church.

A. *Investment of Self.* Stewart III posits that, "One basic presupposition for ministry is the willingness to commit oneself to faithful service to Christ. The investment of self requires submission to God and the surrender of self to be used by the Holy Spirit for service to the community."³⁰ Reclaiming the purpose of the church, according to Stewart III, means clarifying our role and responsibility in its mission and ministry.³¹ He suggest that we ask ourselves the following questions:

- Are you giving yourself completely to God to be used as God wills?
- How invested are you in serving?
- How invested are you in the community and culture of the people where your congregation is located?
- Are your body, mind, soul, and spirit present with you when you attend service at your church?³²

²⁸Ibid., 71-72.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

- B. *Vision*. Stewart III suggests that vision requires imagination and churches need imaginative leaders and ministries that dare to think and do things as never before.³³ He notes two (2) components of vision. First, visions inspire people to move beyond their own barriers and constraints to embrace a reality that is much larger and greater than themselves. Secondly, visions inspire community building and fellowship, two essential ingredients to successful congregations.³⁴
- C. *Saving Souls and Empowering Lives*. The church is designed to save souls and help people live more wholesome lives so that they might empower others across society. Stewart III argues that mainline churches have lost the basic understanding of their fundamental purpose, which is to make disciples of all nations and to share the power of the risen Christ with a dying world.³⁵ The writer agrees with the author's observation that the tendency of denominational institutions to preoccupy themselves with bureaucratic maintenance causes local churches to become more focused on meeting the needs of the denominations rather than saving souls within the communities they serve.³⁶
- D. *Transforming Self, Church, Community, and Society*. Stewart III believes that it is not enough to attend church, become happy and full of the Holy Ghost on Sundays and then fail to translate that awareness into creative energy that will positively transform the self, church, community and ultimately the world.³⁷ The church must be utilized as a catalyst for the creative and positive transformation of those existing structures within the self, church, community, society, and world that thwart person's capacities to actualize their potential and to experience wholeness, peace, and vitality.³⁸

Through the four-part outline, Stewart III notes that many churches have lost their sense of presence and participation in the life of communities and do not address the ultimate concerns of those communities. Thus churches have no ministries that speak to real relationships with the communities they are called to serve and witness. Physical

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

presence in the community is not enough. The church must make its presence know and felt in the community.

In chapter nine, *Reclaiming The Mission Of The Church*, Stewart III cites the many gifts and graces of the church. But, he notes, if congregations are to grow, revitalize, and renew themselves, they must take the steps necessary to reclaim the mission of the church. He also proposes four (4) steps in this process of reclaiming the mission of the church:

1. Step One: *Back to the Future*. Here, the author proposes retrieving those denominational mission elements of the past that made strong and viable churches today (in the future). For example, Stewart III notes that John Wesley and the early Methodists were pioneers of missions and went beyond the four walls of containment to evangelize persons to Christ.³⁹ We know that Wesley traveled thousands of miles on horseback just to save souls for Jesus Christ. Stewart III also noted that going back to the future means we appropriate the early emphasis to cultivating spiritual gifts for service, that demonstrate our faith in witness to the larger community and that we manifest a passion for Christ that translates into a passion for service to God's people.⁴⁰ If Jesus went out to witness the Word to the world, as well as John Wesley, the writer is convinced that we, the church should do the same today.
2. Step Two: *Biblically Based Mission*. Stewart III holds the firm belief that all missions should be biblically based; therefore, he believes the church should coincide with the gospel. The church's mission, he contends, is not only to preach and teach the gospel in a dying world but also feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and empower people in Christ. Jesus' mission to the poor, sick, afflicted, hungry, and oppressed is a missional model worthy of emulation.⁴¹
3. Step Three: *The Church in Mission to Itself*. This refers to a mission that will enable the church to become whole, healthy and well again. The most concise reflection of what "mission to itself" looks like is found in Stewart III's statement, "We think of mission as means of eradicating the world of poverty, hopelessness,

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

and disease. But what about being in mission to eradicate spiritual poverty—poverty of the mind, soul and spirit that exists within the church?”⁴²

4. Step Four: *The Church in Mission to the World*. Ministering beyond the four walls of the church is extremely critical in helping people in need. John Wesley said it best when he proclaimed that, “The world is his parish.” The church must develop holy boldness to travel to every part of the world to witness for Christ and to help others in need.⁴³ What is most exceptional in Stewart III’s analysis of global and local mission is his emphasis in defining our mission to the world we must include the local as well as the global communities.⁴⁴ He writes, “the church must not only reach out to the world but also those communities and societies in our own backyard who need help, hope, and wholeness.”⁴⁵

Stewart III’s theories provided very helpful input for this project. The section concludes with the finding that the crucial role played by missions is that they forms the core belief that its not enough to simply give people something to eat, but authentic missions are teaching people to develop the confidence and internal and external resources that will enable them to feed themselves and others. Authentic mission work is reintroducing mainline denominations to establish a new presence in the community to give witness to the continuing reign of Jesus Christ.

The fourth resource model is *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church From The Inside Out*, by authors/pastors Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro. The idea of church culture is often ignored. However, the authors contend, like a powerful current running through the church, it has the power to move you inland or take you further out to sea; culture is one of the most social realities in the church.⁴⁶ In this profound book, these two

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church From The Inside Out* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 3.

pastors long in the trenches of everyday church life, understands that church culture influences everything, it colors the way we select and introduction missions, ministries, and programs to the church. They support this by insisting that great ideas go nowhere if the culture is unreceptive.⁴⁷

Their point is clear and well taken. For in this field of business, this field most in need of redemption, church culture is the battleground between the preventing church's potential from ever being realized and if empowered by the Holy Spirit, it can reproduce healthy spiritual life. Lewis and Cordeiro are mindful of this fact; they noted how a given church can have the best programs in the world, but deep-rooted change won't happen without the right cultural shift. Change the culture, and everything else changes, including the future. Healthy churches do church from the inside out.⁴⁸

Lewis and Corderio brings together two predominate culture shifts: kingdom values and biblical proportion. What they bring together is what they refer to as changing the default. This they argue must occur because when we instill a new program in church, and think we have succeeded, and then suddenly, the following week, everything could easily have reverted to the way it was. If this happens week after week after week, you have not really shifted the culture at all.⁴⁹

The first lure in changing the default and shifting the church's culture the authors' notes, is, Kingdom Values. It is important to emphasize that point the process of making the shift is not optional; it represents the necessary process of bringing the kingdom of God to life. Here the authors declares, "Jesus made a distinction between

⁴⁷Ibid., 5.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

people of the kingdom and those who, like the Pharisees, merely went to church, prayed, and read the Bible, but Jesus said they had completely missed God's Kingdom."⁵⁰ What is God's kingdom? It is the point at which you come under the rule and reign of God; it is where you trade the treasures of this world and an attitude of self-importance in exchange for the treasures and priorities of God.⁵¹

Lewis and Cordeiro further argue that unless we act otherwise, we are no better than the Pharisees who looked, acted, and even smelled like kingdom people (even when they weren't kingdom people). This task is not as simple one especially in light of the emphasis placed on changing the default. It is imperative, therefore, that if pastors and church leaders assess that the culture isn't healthy, they have not only important responsibility, but also the privilege to shift it. It is imperative that the church to truly demonstrates kingdom values; it will cause the church to be more authentic. It can't be your church if it's going to be God's culture.⁵²

The second lure in changing the default and shifting the church's culture, the authors' note, is, Biblical Proportion. For any spiritual community, culture shift starts with God's promises. Lewis and Cordeiro refers specially to three (3) major areas:

1. *Belief in a Promise.* The authors note that the assurance that things can be better and will be better because God can make it so, the promise of a new culture must be believed and followed. We believe this promise still exists today for leaders courageous enough to embrace it for their congregation, regardless of present circumstances.⁵³

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

2. *Leadership That Embraces Kingdom Values.* This second approach requires fresh leadership. Shifting a culture requires a novel approach to traditional leadership (whether it be new or existing leadership).⁵⁴
3. *Broad Support of Kingdom Culture.* The transition requires a broad congregational commitment. A congregation must be informed and challenged, and the specifics of the change must be spelled out in detail. The pastor and church leaders must clarify and openly challenge the congregation with this new direction.⁵⁵

Summary

This chapter has noted pastors who have explored the elements of developing a community-focused church. Naturally, community-focused churches are more concerned about the perspective and purpose of the church more so than a number of inward-focused programs churches might engage in. Community-focused churches stand alongside those in society who are under-resourced and disenfranchised, looking for ways to uplift and promote the welfare of their local community.

Four resource models have been used here, and each one has had something valuable to contribute to the project being proposed. Slaughter introduced the concept of Mission vs. Mortar, that was a very valuable resource in that, the model proposed in this project is one of missions and ministries serving the unchurched. Hamilton's notion of Leading Beyond the Walls is certainly relevant in that Cecil Memorial UMC is an inward focused church with no connection to the local community. In that sense, Hamilton's array of principles was very helpful.

Stewart III's ideas to reclaim the spiritual vitality and strengthen the spiritual renewal in mainline churches proved to be particularly insightful. His presentation

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

regarding reclaiming both the purpose and mission of the church should be taken seriously by anyone who is concerned about spiritual transformation and church revitalization. Finally, authors Lewis and Cordeiro not only provided new information about how to shift the church culture, their work also served to strengthen and validate ideas already embraced by the writer.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

*An exegesis is a thorough, analytical study of a biblical passage done so as to arrive at a useful interpretation of the passage. Exegesis is theological task, but not a mystical one.*¹

In the Bible, God is the orchestrator of liberation and is on the side of the oppressed. The Moses motif teaches, us this. In the New Testament, Luke 4:18 reads, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”² And in this passage Jesus is actually quoting from Isaiah 61:1.

The tradition of the Old Testament prophets, a prophetic voice preaches a clear word of both judgment and the hope of the church. By preaching judgment, the writer does not have in mind a preacher who rants and raves, who points his finger at parishioners condemning them to eternal damnation. But rather a prophetic voice, having been convicted, holds hearers accountable for their actions. It is a voice that formulates demanding challenges to the church “to do justice, practice steadfast love, and walk humbly with your God.”³

¹Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis*, Fourth Edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 1.

²James Melvin Washington, *I Have A Dream: Writings & Speeches That Changed The World* (New York, NY: Harper Collins), 57.

The objective of the biblical foundation section is to offer an exegetical analysis of both the Old Testament and New Testament focal pericopes. The exegetical analysis is divided into four divisions: (1) The Introduction/Literary Context seeks to provide key historical background information relevant to the interpretation of the focal texts; (2) The Material Content presents the opinions of the scholars representing the pros and cons of their particular findings about the pericope; (3) The Hermeneutical Key presents the theological point of the writer; (4) The Contemporary Application, by using the theological key the writer will state how it is relevant today and what is the message to Black churches today?

Old Testament Text/Exegesis **Amos 5: 21-24**

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (NRSV).⁴

Introduction / Literary Content

Several critical methods are useful in studying the focal periscope, Amos 5: 21-24. Beginning with the historical investigation of the Gospel's authorship, date, place of composition, sources, theological themes and social and religious environment.

³Walter Brueggemann, *Journey To The Common Good* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 35.

⁴*The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 1311 Hebrew Bible.

Author

Most of Amos (1:1) Old Testament characters are introduced by their patronymic (son of...), or at least qualified by a place name (Micah of Moresheth, Mi 1:1) Amos is distinctive in having no further identification; he is one of the twelve who have been called The Minor Prophets.⁵ Amos is notable because he shared with Hosea the distinction of being one of the only two prophets who preached in the Northern Kingdom. The ministry of Amos, no less than that of John the Baptist (Mt 21: 25-26), was not from men but from heaven, he was a fearless character.⁶ We know nothing about some of the prophets except their names (Obadiah, Habakkuk) or a combination of their name and place of residence (Nahum). Only the book of Jeremiah contains a lengthy series of stories about the life of a prophet.⁷

As for Amos, his book tells us that he came from Tekoa, the easternmost village in Judah, situated about five miles south of Bethlehem and ten miles south of Jerusalem.⁸ According to 2 Chronicles 11: 6 and Jeremiah 6:1 Tekoa was fortified by King Rehoboam. We know nothing of his personal history, his age, life span, family life, etc., all these details are untold, except that he preached at least once in Bethel, the North's main sanctuary (7:13). It is unclear where he did most of his preaching, or how often, or

⁵John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 55.

⁶Richard S. Cripps, *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Great Britain, UK: S.P.C.K, 1955), 9.

⁷*The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 340.

⁸Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 5., 56.

over what exact span of time.⁹ The occupation of Amos was somehow associated with shepherds (1:1); it is said that he had acted as a herdsman and trimmer of sycamore trees (7:14), which involves scraping or piercing the figs to hasten their growth and repel insects.¹⁰ Both jobs could have involved him in extensive travel as an agricultural specialist, perhaps frequently into the North.¹¹

By derivation, the word *Amos* might mean Burden-bearer.¹² Above all, though Amos was a prophet. The dark days in which he lived called for a man of sturdy moral fiber and fearlessness. His resilient character was molded in the harsh terrain of the wilderness of Tekoa, enabled him to stand before the priest, and the people, proclaiming the word God had given him.¹³

Date and Place of Composition

The book of Amos is typically dated between 760 and 750 BCE, after Jeroboam's military successes in Gilead (2 Kgs 14:25; cf. Am 6:13; 7:10-17) and before the rise of Tiglath-pileser III made the Assyrian threats obvious.¹⁴

⁹Douglas Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea – Jonah*, Vol. 31 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1987), 284.

¹⁰Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 5., 55.

¹¹Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary, Hosea – Jonah*, 284.

¹²Cripps, *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 22.

¹³*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: 1985), 275.

¹⁴*The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VII, 343.

Amos and the Covenant

Whatever one may wish to say about his style, Amos' message was mostly derivative on two counts: it was God's word, not his, and it conformed closely to the already long-revealed Mosaic covenant.¹⁵ The crimes Amos identifies are those the Sinai covenant defines as crimes (e.g., oppression of the poor, denial of inheritance rights, failure to observe sabbatical and jubilee laws, etc.) therefore, the punishments Amos predicts for Israel all suit the curse categories established in the Pentateuch.

Thus, while some particulars of the message God gave to Amos may be of intense interest, it must be remembered that his message was not essentially new: God, the sovereign enforcer of his covenant, would severely punish its violators but would not destroy them completely. Consequently, a remnant could again one day be his people and do his will.¹⁶

Amos therefore functions not as an innovator but as one called by God to remind and/or inform his generation about old truths. Israel was a covenant people (as were her neighbors) whose God was determined to exercise his responsibilities in accordance with the covenant that bound him to Israel.

Amos and Economics

Yahweh's concern for the plight of the poor and the decadence of the rich pervades the book. From the outset, the maltreatment of economically disadvantaged people by those with economic power is condemned. This is evident in the slave sales

¹⁵Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 288.

¹⁶Ibid.

following the border wars mentioned in 1:3-2:26 (esp. 1:6, 9) and, quite obviously by the initial portrayal of oppression Israel itself (2:6-8).¹⁷

Samaria was obviously a center of economic discrimination (3:9, 10; 4:1), although such practices generally existed throughout the nation as well (5:12; 8:4-6).¹⁸ Jesus taught (Mt 6: 24; cf. 1 Tm 6:10), the danger of materialism is not only in its unfairness to others but in the godless self-centeredness that corrupts an individual. Amos portrays Yahweh as offended both by exploitation and by conspicuous consumption.¹⁹

Amos and His Contemporaries

Under the long and brilliant reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 786-746 B.C.E), the Northern Kingdom, also called the Kingdom of Israel, reached the summit of its material power and prosperity, expanding its territory northward at the expense of Hamath and Damascus, and southward at the expense of Judah. During this entire period, Assyria was weak, and Syria on the decline; Jeroboam took advantage of their mutual weakness to extend his dominion, foster commerce, and accumulate wealth.²⁰

When Amos appeared in the North there was pride (6: 13-14), plenty and splendor in the land, elegance in the cities, and mighty in the palaces.²¹ The rich had their summer and winter palaces adorned with costly ivory (3:15), and luxurious couches with damask pillows (3:12) on which they reclined at their feasts. They planted pleasant vineyards,

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets: Vol. 1* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 27.

²¹Ibid.

anointed themselves in precious oils (6: 4-6; 5:11) and; their women, compared by Amos to the fat cows of Bashan were addicted to wine (4:1). Meanwhile, there was no justice in the land (3:10), the poor were afflicted, exploited, even sold into slavery (2: 6-8; 5:11), and the judges were corrupt (5:12).

Theological Themes

God Is Righteous

God is righteous, just, and moral for these are the qualities, which He demands both from Israel and from the surrounding peoples (ch 1 and 2). Consistent with the facts, God to whom Amos preaches is more than a God of nature or even a God of all nations; He is a God concerned above everything with righteousness.²² Amos is the only book, however, in which God's destructive power is so dominant.

God is not described in this book; words like just, righteous and holy are absent to describe him instead, verbs depicting divine destructive activity are used.²³ The destructive activity of God is emphasized and war dominates the thought of the book. God is portrayed as the main participant in several passages, with twenty-eight different verbs being used to describe his divine role as warrior and destroyer.²⁴

Social Righteousness

Amos came forth as a champion of civic and commercial righteousness promoting, the duty of man to his fellow man. Amos went farther than simply

²²Cripps, *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 24.

²³*The New Interpreter's Bible*, 346.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 345.

considering oppression and injustice to be breaches of a law. To this Hebrew Prophet oppression was a sin committed against a righteous God. In this respect Amos was able to build upon the work of Moses, who may well have taught that righteousness was a part of the true worship of Jehovah.²⁵

Almost certainly Amos was not the first in Israel to preach ethical religion but he did it to a conspicuous degree, and through magnificently forceful language. He stressed this requirement of Jehovah (e. g. *Seek the Lord, and ye shall live...Seek good, and not evil that ye may live...Hate the evil, and love the good* (1: 6, 15, 44).

Social and Religious Environment

The nation was divided very sharply into lower and upper classes. The former consisted of the possessors of the land, and the merchants. The stratum of Israelites society was composed of peasants and laborers. The moral condition, as defined by Richard S. Cripps has two intertwining aspects. It is (1) “characterized by *luxury and self-indulgence* on the part of the richer element.”²⁶ The book is furnished with details. The dwellings of these men were of hewn stone (Am 5:11), and some were ivory-fitted (3:15). More than a few were built in the combination of summer house and winter house (3:15). In the houses were couches, often inlaid with ivory (6:4a), and furnished with damask cushions (3:12b). Food might be of choice lamb or calves of the stall (6:4b).

Worse, however, than self-indulgence was what Cripps called *the oppression of the weak by the strong* (3:9).²⁷ This vice exhibited itself in two special forms.

²⁵Cripps, *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 26.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 6

²⁷*Ibid.*

(A) Commercial dishonesty was the first. The dealers cheated with measures and money, and what they sold was the refuse of the wheat; (B) There was injustice in the courts.²⁸

By accepting bribes and giving the case against those whom they knew to be guiltless (5:12), the judges turned judgment to wormwood and to gall (5:7; 6:12). They sold the righteous for silver; and the oppressive creditor delivered into slavery the poor man whose debt was but the value of a pair of shoes (2:6; 8:6).

Both Jewish and Christians interpreters typically sought messages of comfort and hope in the Old Testament there is little of that to be found in Amos. As a source of ethical teaching, the fact that the book contains only one exhortation, with a faint promises (5:4-6; 14-15), made it less appealing than other books, that are indeed filled with promises.²⁹

Historical Background

There is almost unanimous agreement that the book of Amos is the earliest of the prophetic books. The superscription of the book (1:1) dates it during the reigns of Uzziah, King of Judah (783-742 BCE), and Jeroboam II, King of Israel (785-745 BCE).³⁰ It marks the beginning of a unique tradition in the history of religion: prophecies of the approaching end of the existence of God's people based upon God's judgment of how they failed to live according to the divine standards.³¹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹*The New Interpreter's Bible*, 340.

³⁰Ibid., 342.

³¹Ibid.

Amos was mainly, if not totally, turning his oracles of doom against the northern realm of Israel which was often characterized by its capital Samaria (2:6; 3:1, 9; 4:1; 5:1; 7:10).³² God's primary role in the book is to act as judge and executioner of persons who have refused to obey the divine standards of justice. More obvious to the contemporary reader, however, are two striking characteristics of the book: the powerful language and its passionate concern for the oppressed.³³

The most important aspect of the historical setting of Amos is an event that occurred after most (if not all) of the book had been formed, the end of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE. This is poignant because the impending death of Israel serves as the essential message of the book.³⁴

Social and Cultural Context

Amos is often referred to as the prophet of social justice. Yet, he was also the prophet who pronounced judgment and annihilation, with no pity for the numberless masses of people reduced to servitude in their own land.³⁵ The rich were in the minority, while the poor comprised the majority. Small farms and properties that had been in families for generations were brought by the wealthy, and, as the saying goes, the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer.³⁶ This effect of poverty is evident in the relationship of one human being to another and one family to another.

³²Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Central Ideas In Amos* (Norway, UK: Oslo University Press, 1961), 11.

³³*The New Interpreter's Bible*, 339.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 343.

³⁵Megan McKenna, *Prophets, Words of Fire* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 64.

³⁶*Ibid.*

Injustice rules the land, and the poor are being swallowed up in the greed of those who conveniently forget that their relationship with Yahweh was founded on justice and faithfulness. This is the backdrop of Amos's call as a prophet. The situation in Israel has deteriorated to the point that the wealthy few act with utter without antipathy, intent on greedily producing more cash crops, and are insensitive to the desperate situation that is destroying the very foundation of their lives and, more importantly, their relationship with Yahweh.

Movement Of The Argument

Amos 5: 21-24 is likely the most best-known passage in the book of Amos and thought by many to encapsulate the central core of Amos's message.³⁷ The theme of Israel's futile and unacceptable worship, contrasted with what God truly desires of Israel, is not a new concept (4: 4-5; 5:4-7), although it is the most comprehensive and striking statement of that theme.³⁸ He is focused on righteousness, due to God and acting like a neighbor in their relationships, being concern for the welfare of the other; it is the fulfillment of the moral demands of the covenant and not the ritual obligations that please God.³⁹

As discussed earlier, the *Woes* and the theme of repentance come together in this memorable address.⁴⁰ Amos is especially concerned with justice as the integrity of the

³⁷Bruce C. Birch, *Hosea, Joel, and Amos* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 219.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Francis Andersen and David N. Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible, Amos*, Volume 24 A, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 58.

judicial process is in the gates, the guarantee of access to a forum where wrong can be confronted and set right. With them, Amos calls attention to the quality of Israel's life and not the quantity of its sacrifices or praise. The culmination point is reached with the statement on justice and equity in verse 24.⁴¹

This verse is connected to the *Woes* passages in 5:7 (and 10-12) and 6:12-13, where the same pair is presented and where the same point is made about turning justice and righteousness into worm-wood and gall.⁴² The way to repent is to abandon the sanctuaries, with their false worship and elaborate ritual, which sponsor and condone rank injustice and outright criminal behavior, and to institute real justice and equity in the gate like an ever-flowing stream.⁴³

Material Content

The first section (vs. 21-24) is an angry denunciation (vs. 21-22) followed by an earnest plea for repentance that has both its negative aspect (stop what you are doing, v 23a) and constructive side (achieve justice, v 24).⁴⁴

Now comes a fierce divine rejection of the way the Israelites worshiped. In the prophets, the citation of wrongdoing usually precedes the announcement of a punishment. In the present oracle, the order is somewhat reversed. Not until verses 24-26 does the hearer/reader learn of the charges against Israel. This continues the pattern set in verses

⁴¹Ibid., 59

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

18-20 of placing priority on getting the Israelites to realize that their entire preconception about their relation to Yahweh was incorrect.⁴⁵

Stronger words could not be found that imply such total rejection and opposition. *I hate, I despise your festivals*. Its standard use in legal text indicates formal renunciation or severance of a relationship, as in divorce.⁴⁶ Elsewhere Yahweh hates robbery (Is 61:8); here, in Amos 5:21, we can read an elliptical formulation: “I hate you because of your feasts” because religious services are no substitute for justice.⁴⁷ Leviticus 26:31 warns the covenant people that if they break Yahweh’s laws, *I will lay waste your sanctuaries and I will not approve the pleasing aroma of your offerings*. Your feast does not connote feasts in general, but the three major feasts designated by the term: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of booths (Ex 23: 14-17; 34: 22-25; Dt 16: 9-17).⁴⁸

I take no pleasure in. *Take pleasures* has smell as its basic sense. Seen collectively, they represent the closing of a divine sense (smell, touch, sight, hearing) to Israel’s religious practices; God had become numb to Israel’s efforts to draw God’s regard toward them.⁴⁹ The term comes from the realm of burnt offerings, and alludes to the smell of sweet savor or a pleasing aroma that ascended from the burning sacrifice.⁵⁰

⁴⁵Douglas Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary, Hosea – Jonah*, Vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1987), 354.

⁴⁶Andersen and Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible, Amos*, 525.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 526.

⁴⁸Thomas McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, and Amos*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 431.

⁴⁹Bruce C. Birch, *Hosea, Joel, and Amos* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 219.

⁵⁰McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 431.

In Genesis 8: 20-21 Noah offers sacrifices on the altar, and Yahweh then smells the soothing odor of these sacrifices. Note Amos 5:22, in which the first sacrifices are mentioned with the same verb. Verse 21b is therefore elliptical and should be understood as meaning, I will not smell the sweet odor of the sacrifices you offer in your solemn assemblies. The same may be implied in 21A, the rejection being aimed not only at the feasts but at the sacrifices offered during the feasts and the people who make the sacrifices.⁵¹

God wants no part of their holy days, of their offerings, or even of their hymns of praise.

God wants justice and righteousness, and if they were neglected, the result could only be one: *Therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus* (5:27). Yahweh reacted violently against a cult which tried to hide their moral deficiencies.⁵²

What are the objects of these harsh divine responses? It is the entire range of Israel's liturgical and devotional practice that draws such displeasure. In the previous verse, as well verse 5, Amos declared Jehovah to be dissatisfied with the people's worship. In this verse as in verse 25, Amos seems to particularly condemnation their sacrifices and offerings. The Lord has stated that he rejects them with utter hatred.

Israel's religious observances; now he expresses this thought in a concise protasis-apodosis structure. *Even though*. The phrase introduces a tricolon in which the protasis implicitly, also applies to the apodosis (i.e., *though* they make whole burnt offerings, grain, or peace offerings or offerings of well-being, he will not accept them either, he will not take pleasure in them or even regard them).⁵³ These offerings were important aspects of Israel's levitical heritage.

⁵¹Andersen and Freedman, 526-527.

⁵²Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Central Ideas In Amos* (Norway, UK: Oslo University Press, 1961), 49.

⁵³McComiskey, 431.

The law of the whole burnt offering includes, that which *goes up* in smoke to God (e.g., Gn 8:20; Ex 32:6; Lv 14:20; Dt 12: 13-14); the accepted connotation of the law of the grain offerings is a (*gifts offered to God*) (e.g., Gn 4: 3-5, 32: 13-16, 43:11; Ex 29:41; Lv 2:1; Nm 4:16, 16:15; 1 Sm 2:17, 29).⁵⁴ *I will not accept*, is a phrase that conveys idea of pleasing; and, *To accept*, conveys the sense of having as its object either a person or his deed or offering (Mal 1:10, 13; Ps 51:18).⁵⁵ The context here informs the word with an idea akin to favorable response. God will not look favorably on their sacrifices or regard them as pleasing gifts.

Yahweh has already rejected the cult's feasts and its sacrifices. Here, He rejects even its praise. Vocal and instrumental music were integral to worship in the time of Old Testament (Ps 150; Ez 2:65; 1 Chr 15: 16-24; 2 Chr 5:13; 23:13; Isa 5:12; Dan 3: 5-15).⁵⁶ This details preserves and affirms the belief that Yahweh's presence is localized in the shrine (his palace) and worshipers go there to perform for his entertainment and pleasure.⁵⁷ Now Yahweh will neither look at (v 22) nor listen to His people's worship. Amos announced that Yahweh hated and despised the sacrifices and offerings as well as the cultic feasts, with their songs and music. It was a cult emptied of its content, and it was not accompanied by a life in accordance with the ethical standards of Yahweh.⁵⁸ This is the climax of this passage and one of the most recognizable lines in all prophetic literature. Its images are powerful. So much so that some have argued them to be images

⁵⁴Ibid., 431.

⁵⁵Andersen and Freedman, 527.

⁵⁶Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 354-355.

⁵⁷Andersen and Freedman, 528.

⁵⁸Kapelrud, *Central Ideas In Amos*, 81.

of God's judgment. It is God's justice and righteousness that will overtake Israel like an overwhelming flood, ending the hypocrisy of Israel's worship. This does not seem thoroughly convincing though. Every other reference to justice and righteousness in Amos (5:7; 6:12), concern what is expected of Israel in his covenant relationship to God.⁵⁹

It is far more likely that this verse (24) represents God's alternative to the self-serving worship condemned in verses 21-23. What Yahweh truly desires is justice and righteousness. He requires regular, consistent keeping of the covenant. Sacrifices and other elements of worship (vs. 22, 23) constituted occasional, intermittent righteousness and were rejected because they were not coupled with proper living in general.⁶⁰

This also helps to reveal the reason for God's feral punishment and rejection of worship: the absence of justice and righteousness in Israel's society. Justice and righteousness are parallel terms referring to basic fairness and economic equity in society.⁶¹ These concepts extend to the courts, business practices, and to provision of and access to services. Only when personal concern for the law is incorporated into their social structure and rightness characterizes their dealings with others will their worship be acceptable.⁶² A society truly in harmony with Yahweh's will must practice justice and

⁵⁹Birch, *Hosea, Joel, and Amos*, 220.

⁶⁰Stuart, 355.

⁶¹Charles L. Aaron, Jr., *Preaching Hosea, Amos, and Micah* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 65.

⁶²*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 316.

routine and widespread (cf. 5:7; 6:12) covenant that it cannot be kept merely now and again.⁶³

Canaanite cultic religion allowed people to be personally immoral and unethical; they could still be in good standing with the gods if they merely supported the cult enthusiastically.⁶⁴ Justice and righteousness cannot stop and start like a wilderness wadi that flows with water only during the rainy seasons and otherwise is just a dry stream bed; they must instead continue night and day, all year, like the strong stream that never goes dry.⁶⁵

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. The rich and the ruling classes neglected and misused their countrymen. No sacrifices and no could hide this fact, and Amos demanded justice and righteousness (5:7, 15, 24; 6:12). Amos' point then follows that righteousness should be constant, not sporadic.⁶⁶ It has been suggested though, that the reference to water is rather pedestrian, especially because the verb *gll* describes the powerful roll of waves or billows, not just the ordinary flow of water.⁶⁷

People's actions are portrayed as being the opposite of justice and righteousness. A simple token of justice and righteousness will not suffice. An ever-flowing stream is one that can be relied on to provide water at all times, not merely a seasonal wadi.

⁶³Stuart, 355.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Andersen and Freedman, 52.

⁶⁷Ibid., 528.

Similarly justice and righteousness were to be permanent characteristics.⁶⁸ Justice and righteousness have been expected from the people since ancient times. It was the honorable and correct behavior within the Covenant, the right way of living before God and together with one's neighbors.⁶⁹ Morally, it can be seen lacking in the way the rich and ruling class neglected and misused their fellowman.

Hermeneutic / Theological Key

Throughout this prophetic book, Amos exposes the inadequacy of faith of people who focus on loving God but forget about loving their fellow man. Whether Amos thought in terms of covenant theology or not, he clearly saw the treatment of the poor in Israel as a fundamental rejection of the relationship that Yahweh had established with Israel, which required obedience not only in worship but also to maintain of a just society.

As in 4: 4-5, the Lord affirms that because their hearts have turned from Him, they used religion strictly as a mechanical means to appease Him. The Lord has no interest in the people's attachment to the cultic system. The routine observance of the Levitical ritual was meaningless because the people lacked the love, concern and humble obedience for God that mark a sincere profession of faith.

God is interested in their hearts, not in their sacrifices. Every aspect of their ritual was an act of disobedience because it ignored the heart of the law: love for God and

⁶⁸Richard James Coggins, *The New Century Bible Commentary, Joel and Amos* (Great Britain, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 132.

⁶⁹Kapelrud, *Central Ideas In Amos*, 65.

concern for others. Isaiah conveyed a similar sentiment to Judah and Jerusalem when he declared:

Bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them (Is 1:13-14, NRSV).

Why would the prophet represent the Lord as rejecting his own institutions? The answer is that these offerings had become ends in themselves; they had rejected the heart of the law, which was love for one's neighbor. By observing religious rituals, they were lulled into thinking they were fulfilling the whole law and giving God his rightful due. How much does the church today need to learn this lesson? How many worshipers attend solemn assemblies, falsely believing that their ritual attendance pleases God? Now, as it was then, God desires not just our attendance, but our hearts.

Justice is probably the word most often associated with Amos because of 5:24, but the word itself occurs also in 5:7, 15, 24; and 6:12. Without question, it is the perversion of justice that Amos has identified as the major cause of Israel's fatal illness. It was an unhealthy society; so ill it could not survive much longer. The church is called to alleviate poverty, solve problems in our penal system, combat the neglect and abuse of the vulnerable, and improve the health of the community.

In an important footnote, Marvin A. McMickle, a prolific writer on prophetic preaching, wrote:

The abuse of the poor by the rich, the neglect of the neediest in our society, and the focus of a religious life that is defined by the proper performance of rituals and not the dogged pursuit of righteousness is where we find ourselves in America in the early years of the twenty-first century.

I am expressing concern that the focus within so many Black churches has shifted away from justice and righteousness to "getting your praise on." That is precisely what Amos was condemning when he uttered these words from God:

*Take away from me the noise of your songs,
I will not listen to the melody of your harps,
But let justice roll down like water,
And righteousness like an everflowing stream (Am 5: 23-24).*

What has happened to the legacy of Vernon Johns, Martin Luther King Jr., Howard Thurman, Samuel Proctor, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and James Lawson? Where are the successors to Richard Allen, Nannie Helen Borroughs, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Prathia Hall?

Why is it that more black preachers today are interested in helping people get their praise on than they are in getting school improved, or getting the levels of poverty in the community right around their church reduced, or getting the rate of divorce lowered, or getting more and more black men into school and out of prison? One has to labor long and hard these days to hear a prophetic word even from within the African America church – that part of the body of Christ that forty short years ago had the audacity to see as its mission the mission the goal of “saving the soul of America.”⁷⁰

Contemporary Application

We have to be reminded by Amos that, on the one hand there is an unbroken relationship between, the injustice and evil we perpetuate and, on the other, what the prophets would call a divinely inspired catastrophe. There is a general consensus among scholars today that the topic of these passages is not what is wrong with worship, but what is wrong with the worshipers. Amos does not intend to replace ritual with social action; rather, what goes on in society must correspond with what is said and done in worship. Amos teaches us that God does not accept the worship of those who show no interest in justice in our daily life.

Acknowledging that most preachers fail to take prophetic preaching, and God’s demand for righteousness and justice seriously, Marvin A. McMickle is both

⁷⁰McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone?* 15-16.

aware and critical that many preachers tend to become preoccupied with such pressing matters as new membership or confirmation classes, the maintenance or renovation of the church building, whether or not the annual budget will be met, and how to maintain a feeling of intimacy in the face of a rapidly growing or shifting membership.⁷¹

What may be lost in the rush to respond to these issues is that congregation's are responsible for responding to then escalating problem of homelessness in their community, or overcrowding in the jails, or the abuse of drugs and alcohol by youngsters in the local school district. It is the preacher's job to remain watchful, to use the image of Ezekiel 3 and 33, and to sound the alarm about the injuries being inflicted upon people and the injustices that are taking place.⁷²

McMickle reflected on this matter of prophetic preaching in his book, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*. There he comments,

For those who live and worship in exurbia and who never get close enough to the grimy side of America for anything to rub off on them, prophetic preaching becomes even more urgent. It is crucial that people with wealth, power, and influence be challenged by a prophetic word that calls upon them to direct their resources not simply for tax advantages for themselves, but for a fairer and more just society for their fellow citizens. Prophetic preaching or prophesy the word of God is precisely what Amos did. He decried the abuse of the poor in an economic system that favored and rewarded those who were already rich. He condemned a class of people, referred to as cow feeling or caring about poverty and misery being experienced by many of their own people.

Amos also made it clear that the comfort class was in large measure responsible for that inequity in society. In a nation whose religious life seemed overly focused on the Temple of Solomon, the Levitical priesthood, the careful observance of a legalistic lifestyle, and the proper practices of holy living, prophetic preaching focused the people's attention on the issues that were broader than how worship or where to pray or what it was lawful to eat. The Mosaic

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

covenant included a series of clear commandments to care for the widows, the orphans, and the stranger among them. When the people of Israel lost sight of that commandment, the prophet were there to remind them, Thus says God! Prophetic preaching also never allows the community of faith to believe that participation in the rituals of religious life can ever be an adequate substitute for that form of ministry that is designed to uplift the least of these in our world.⁷³

New Testament Text/Exegesis **Mark 6: 30-44**

The apostle gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourself and rest a while. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; Send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat. But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat? And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish. Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men"⁷⁴ (NRSV).

Introduction / Literary Content:

Several critical methods are useful in studying the focal periscope, Mark 6:30-44.

Beginning with the historical investigation of the Gospel's authorship, date, place of composition, sources, theological themes and social and religious environment.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 69.

Author

Regarding authorship, the researcher presupposes the following general information. Although the Gospel of Mark like the other three Gospels is anonymous, there is a strong and early tradition that Mark was its author and that he was closely associated with the apostle Peter, from whom he obtained information about Jesus.⁷⁵ The oldest surviving reference to Mark's authorship of the Gospel bearing his name comes from Papias, a bishop of Hierapolis at approximately 130 or 140 CE.⁷⁶ An early church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, quotes Papias as writing that an unnamed presbyter (church elder) was his source:

This, too, the presbyter used to say, "Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of his followers, but later as I said, one of Peter's. Peter used to adapt his teachings to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things just, as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only—to leave out, nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it" (Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 3.39).⁷⁷

This information associating Peter and Mark is echoed later in the anti-Marcionite prologue (160 / 80) which also refers to Mark as being stubby fingered.⁷⁸ Accordingly, Mark is identified as Peter's interpreter who wrote down what the Lord said and did based on his notations of Peter's preaching; Interpreter can mean either a translator

⁷⁵Tremper Longman II and David E. Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew & Mark*, Vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 678.

⁷⁶Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament; A Student's Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 128.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Robert Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary, Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34A (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 27.

(e.g., from Aramaic to Greek) or, what is more likely in this context so full of semitechnical rhetorical language, the transmitter (middleman) of Peter's preaching to others.⁷⁹ Papias statement also indicates that Peter presented his materials in anecdotally rather than as a complete work and that Mark notes of this preaching became the source for his Gospel.⁸⁰

Who was Mark though? The researcher will note two possibilities. First, and more traditionally, Mark has been identified with the Mark of Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37-39; 1 Peter 5:13 and the Pauline corpus (e.g., Col 4:10; 2 Tm 4:11; Phlm 24). He was John Mark, an associate of the two giants of the early Church, Peter and Paul, and a member of the primitive community in Jerusalem which met in the upper room of his mother's home (Acts 12:12), where Jesus may have celebrated the Last Supper (Mk 14:14-15; Acts 1:13-14).⁸¹

A second, and more modern possibility is given by several scholars that have distinguished between Mark and the John Mark of the New Testament. For example, in *The Didache, A Commentary By Kurt Neiderwimmer*, Neiderwimmer interpreted the consistent references to Mark to be an associate of Peter rather than Paul in the tradition of the second and third centuries. He has sought to distinguish Mark the associate of Peter in 1 Peter 5:13 from John Mark the associated of Paul in Acts and the Pauline corpus.⁸²

⁷⁹Ibid., 27.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Kurt Neiderwimmer, *Didache Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 155.

Date and Place of Composition

Similar to its place of origin, it is not possible to date the writing of Mark's Gospel with certainty. The date of the Gospel of Mark is as obscure as is the author. Nowhere does Mark, or any of the canonical Gospels, give specific information by which it can be date can be determined. An approximate date of composition rests on a combination of what external sources report and what internal evidence within the Gospel suggests with respect to dating. With respect to external evidence, Irenaeus reports that Mark did not reduce the Gospel to writing until after the exodus of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome.⁸³

The use of exodus in the passage connotes the death of Peter and Paul. Early church tradition is unanimous that Peter died during the latter years of Nero's reign, who ruled from 54 to 68.⁸⁴ External evidence thus suggests a date for Mark in the mid to late 60s of the first century. Arguments from internal evidence for the dating of Mark rest on several possible relevant data.

First, Mark's emphasis on Jesus as the *suffering* Son of God, and the concomitant emphasis on suffering *discipleship* (8:31-91; 13:3-13), suggest that the Second Gospel was written to Christians undergoing persecution.⁸⁵ The persecution both actual and barbaric occurred under Nero in Rome. Seeking a scapegoat for the fire in Rome, a fire

⁸³James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 6.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

that the Roman historian Tacitus blamed on the orders of Nero himself—the emperor fastened the blame on Christians and subjected them to the most gruesome horrors.⁸⁶

The Roman conflagration occurred in the year 64, with Nero’s persecution of Christians following soon after. A second datum relevant to the dating of Mark is the statement in 13:14 concerning “the abomination that cause desolation standing where it does not belong.” The Greek word for standing (*hestekota*) is given as masculine, which has suggested to many commentators that the statement is an enigmatic reference to the destruction of the temple by Titus in A. D. 70.

Theological Themes

Eschatological Urgency

Mark launches Jesus’ career with a startlingly eschatological message: *The time has come, the kingdom of God is upon you: repent and believe the Gospel* (1:15).

Mark’s sense of eschatological urgency permeates his entire Gospel, profoundly affecting his portrayal of Jesus’ life and teaching. Mark is more a Gospel of action than of teaching. Things happen immediately, one of Mark’s favorite expressions. Only two discourses, one on the Parables of The Kingdom (4: 1-33) and The Eschatological discourse (13: 1-37); but miracles abound—Mark includes twenty accounts.⁸⁷ Combined with healing summaries, these units comprise a third of the Gospel and are nearly one-

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Darrell L. Brock, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, The Gospel of Mark* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 398.

half of the first ten chapters.⁸⁸ Mark presents Jesus as one who displays authority both in his actions and his teachings.

Servant of the Lord

Mark depicts Jesus using the profile of a servant, especially as the embodiment of Isaiah's suffering servant of God. The most important characteristic of Isaiah's servant of the Lord is the effect of his vicarious and atoning suffering (Is 53:3, 10), which is found nowhere else in the Old Testament.⁸⁹ It is precisely this aspect of the Servant that Jesus fulfills in his mission as Son of Man, to give his life as a ransom for many (10:45).

Son of God

In Mark, Jesus is referenced by various titles—teacher, rabbi, Son of David, Christ, Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God. Of these, the final title is unquestionably the most significant. Son of God defines both the beginning and end of the Gospel: it occurs in the opening pronouncement of the Gospel. The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1), as well as in the concluding and climactic confession of the centurion at the cross, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (15:39).⁹⁰ Mark establishes not only *that* Jesus is the Son of God but also *what kind* of Son of God he is. Unlike the various heroes and divine men of the Hellenistic world who were elevated above the mundane, Jesus exhibits his divine Sonship in the midst of a troubled world.⁹¹

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark*, 131.

⁹⁰Ibid., 191.

⁹¹Ibid.

Historical Background

The importance of the feeding of five thousand for the early church is evident in the fact that it is the only miracle that appears in all four Gospels.

Social, Cultural, and Religious Environment (Context)

Given the emphasis on suffering in Mark, this Gospel was probably associated with a period of persecution, especially against the church in Rome. The fact that Nero burned Christians, blaming them for the great fire in Rome, illuminates the severity of the situation. Christians were also disliked because they refused to share in the adulation and worship of the emperor that was part of Roman nationalism. Thus they were seen as disloyal citizens. The Gospel should, then, encourage Christians who suffer for their faith.

Material Content

This particular story is reminiscent of several Old Testament passages such as the miraculous feeding of the people in the wilderness (Ex 16; Ps 78: 18-30; 105:40) and the feeding miracles of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 17: 8-16; 2 Kgs 4: 1-7, 42-44).⁹² The apostles occur only here and in a disputed reading in 3:14. Contextually, the twelve disciples of Jesus in 6:7 are designated those sent as the sent ones or missionaries. It points primarily to their role rather than their status, so there is no reason to take the term as a title, the Apostles.⁹³ Therefore, the term apostles and their action of reporting to

⁹²Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary, Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34A (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 336.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 338.

Jesus demonstrate the Twelve's dependency on Jesus and how their mission was an extension of his mission.⁹⁴

The phrase *All they did and taught* summarizes their mission endeavors. Obviously, they included the exorcisms and healings mentioned in 6: 13 and perhaps even the preaching of 6:12. Typical of Mark, however, the Twelve also report their ministry of teaching in keeping with the evangelist's accent on Jesus' ministry of teaching (1:21; 3:6b; 6:6b;).⁹⁵ Here again we see the essential relationship between the mission of the Twelve and Jesus' mission.

Privately to a deserted place. This is one of Mark's typical double-sided expressions. It expresses two of his characteristic themes: the seclusion of Jesus with the disciples (4: 10, 34) and sojourn in the wilderness (1: 12-13, 35, 45).⁹⁶ Despite the common association of wilderness (1:4, 13) with an uninhabited place (1:35) the locale remains unidentified in Mark, Luke 9: 10 places it near Bethsaida, John 6:23 near Tiberias.

The suggestion has frequently been made that Jesus withdrawal from public activity was motivated by his fear that Herod Antipas, who linked him with John the Baptist (6: 14-16), would treat him in the same brutal way he treated John. Albeit nothing is said in the passage about such a motivation. In keeping with the sequence of events and with Markan theology in general, it is suggested that John's death prompts Jesus to

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible, Mark 1-8*, Vol 27 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 405.

devote more concentrated attention to the disciples who will take his place after his own death.⁹⁷

Many. Gk *polloi*. This favorite Markan word occurs six times in the first six verses of our passage. In 6: 33 *many (polloi)* people see Jesus and the disciples going away; in 6:34 Jesus sees a great crowd (*many polyn*) and begins to teach them *many things (polla)*; and, in 6:35 the disciples say that the hour is late (*polle*). The Greek sentence is awkwardly overloaded.

The term *many* is located after the two verbs *saw* and *recognized*, but prior to the conjunction *and*. In the sentence, they could refer to an indefinite group who saw Jesus and the disciples leave, a smaller group who recognized those in the boat, and that group plus others who ran to the spot where the boat was going.⁹⁸ Most instances where the word is utilized emphasize the magnitude of the need Jesus confronts; the reference in 6:34 to the many things Jesus teaches points to the adequacy of his response to this challenge.⁹⁹

They were seen. Gk *eidon auton*, lit. they saw them, is another example of the third person plural used impersonally (cf. 1:22, 32; 2:3; 3:32; 5:14; 6:16).¹⁰⁰ Verse 33 is ambiguous in Greek; some manuscripts reading that the crowd gathered to the disciples once they landed, others that the crowd got there *before* them, and still others

⁹⁷Ibid., 405.

⁹⁸The New Interpreter's Bible, *The Testament Articles Matthew and Mark* Volume VIII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 600.

⁹⁹Marcus, *The Anchor Bible*, 406.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

combined the two event.¹⁰¹ Evidence from the manuscript slightly favors the second reading. If this is the correct reading, then we must reckon with remarkable deliberate action on the part of the crowd, anticipating Jesus' movements and awaiting his arrival.

Seeing the crowd, Jesus has compassion on them because they are like sheep with no shepherd. The Greek word for compassion, *splangnizesthai*, is used in the New Testament of Jesus exclusively, and his compassion is expressed in teaching them many things."¹⁰² The comparison evokes a well-established metaphor. Mesopotamian kings already described themselves as shepherds of their people, and in the Old Testament and later Jewish literature both God and human leaders are pictured as shepherds who lead and care for their flock.

Moses prays that the people will have a leader so that they will not find themselves like sheep without a shepherd (Nm 27:17); the prophets condemn kings for failing to act as shepherds (1Kgs 22:17), Ezekiel promise a new age in which God will shepherd the people (Ez 34:5-6).¹⁰³ Some interpreters include the green grass on which the crowd is told to recline (v 39) in the shepherd image, claiming Jesus' actions reenact Psalms 23:2.¹⁰⁴

In the Old Testament and later Jewish traditions, two shepherds in particular, Moses and David, are noted for their transition from the literal to the metaphorical forms

¹⁰¹Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark*, 191.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³The New Interpreter's Bible, *The Testament Articles Matthew and Mark*, vol. VIII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 601.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 600.

of their vocation (Ps 78:70-72 and Ex 2:2-3).¹⁰⁵ Our passage thus strengthens the impression that Jesus is both the David Messiah (where the Messiah is termed for shepherd) and a Mosaic figure. It is the latter, Mosaic, aspect of the shepherd image that is most emphasized in our passage.

The sheep without a shepherd phrase is not limited to Moses in the Old Testament; it becomes a proverbial metaphor for the people suffering either from lack of strong leadership (Nm 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Jdg 11:19) or through evil rulers (Ez 34:8; Zec 10:2), and both nuances may apply in the present case.¹⁰⁶ Mark is likely drawing on A Jewish tradition that sees the Torah, the teaching of Moses, as the divine response to the dilemma of the shepherd-less sheep of Israel (Ps 119:176).¹⁰⁷

The Christological nature of this saying may be especially apparent in Numbers 27: 16-17, where Moses' request for someone to lead Israel is answered in Joshua (Nm 27: 18-23). Now a greater Joshua (Jesus in Greek), who possesses even more of the Spirit of God (Nm 27: 18 and Mk 1:10), has come to lead Israel (Heb 4:8).¹⁰⁸

All three Synoptic Gospels contain a reference to the miracle that takes place late in the day (Mt 14: 15; Lk 9:12). Three times in the passage of the feeding of the five thousand Mark notes the darkness, distance, and desertion of the surroundings (31, 32, & 35). *Since the hour was already late.* Mark uses the genitive absolute frequently to indicate time (14:17; 15:33; 42; 16:2), and most of these usages have symbolic

¹⁰⁵Marcus, *The Anchor Bible*, 406.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸Robert H. Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 313.

connotations, as does the notice of time in 1:35.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, *polles* (meaning *late* here), moreover, is a favorite Markan word, and it is missing in Matthew, Luke, and John.

Its presence in Mark creates a temporal difficulty: although it is already late in the day, Jesus has time to arrange the huge crowd in ordered ranks, feed them bread and fish, have the massive amount of leftovers collected, to send the disciples away, dismiss the crowd, to climb a mountain, and then pray all before nightfall.¹¹⁰ Since a number of events would still transpire normally (arranging the crowd, feeding them, collecting the leftovers, sending the disciples away, dismissing the crowd, climbing the mountain to pray) before nightfall (6:47; cf. 15:42), it is probably best to interpret this temporal designation as the normal dinner hour.¹¹¹

The disciples are swept away by the magnitude of the problem, just as Moses was when confronted with the need to feed the Israelites in the wilderness (Nm 11:13, 22).¹¹² The disciples' suggestion that Jesus dismiss the crowd so they can purchase food for themselves in the surrounding countryside and villages seems like a reasonable and considerate suggestion on their part although it loses sight of the fact that Jesus as the Good Shepherd (6:34) and that his miracles in 1:21-6:6 indicate that he can and will feed his sheep.¹¹³ Jesus did not concur with the disciples' suggestion that the food needed to feed the crowd was to be garnished from the resources of the neighboring towns and villages. Jesus' response, however, confused the disciples because

¹⁰⁹Marcus, *The Anchor Bible*, 406.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, 314.

¹¹²Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark*, 192.

¹¹³Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, 313.

he challenged them personally to feed the crowd. Jesus uses the emphatic personal pronoun to convey a blatant message.

You give them something to eat. Quite apart from how one understands the miracle story itself, the command of God to feed hungry people becomes a direct personal address: You give them something to eat.¹¹⁴ The disciples themselves were to supply it. Their response, more a rhetorical question, expresses the impossibility of Jesus' command, in light of their resources.¹¹⁵ Jesus' command indicates that the disciples are expected to serve as extensions of his own miracle-working power and authority.¹¹⁶ They could only think of the impossible amount of money it would take to feed a crowd such as this one. A *denarius* was equaled to a day's wages. Two hundred denarii represented the pay a common laborer earned in a period of about eight months (Mt 20: 2-15).¹¹⁷

Despite the dismal resources, Jesus orders the crowd to sit in groups of hundreds and fifties. Such groups of such size made the crowd manageable enough to serve, but they may have served more than a practical function. The arrangement certainly recalls God's miraculous provision for Israel in the wilderness. Moses had arranged the Israelites in groups of 1,000, 500, 100, and ten under their respective leaders (Ex 18:25; Nm 31:14), and similar formations were practiced at the Qumran community

¹¹⁴M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2009), 134.

¹¹⁵Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 341.

¹¹⁶Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, 313.

¹¹⁷Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew & Mark, Vol. 9* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2010), 790.

(1QS 2:21-22; CD 13:1).¹¹⁸ Jesus presides over the multitude like a Jewish father over a family meal. This may hint at the eschatological gathering of God's people on the last day.¹¹⁹ *And he ordered them (the disciples) to have all (the people) recline in companies on the green grass. (6:39).* To recline, or sit down is the normal position for eating a banquet meal and is used with respect to the messianic banquet in (Mt 8:11 and Lk 13:29).¹²⁰

Not surprisingly, the early church saw a parallel between the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper, both accounts of which contain the sequence of taking bread and blessing and breaking and giving to the disciples (14:22).¹²¹ If the celebration of the Lord's Supper was understood by Mark's readers as a proleptic experience of the messianic banquet (14:25), it is quite possible that the feeding of the five thousand was also viewed as a proleptic anticipation of that future banquet.¹²²

And all ate and were filled. This phrase provides confirmation of the miracle. *All* had eaten to their satisfaction. *Five thousand men* most likely specify men rather than persons and thus, Matthew's account renders it *without woman and children* (Mt 14:21).

Hermeneutic / Theological Key

Given the darkness, the lateness of the hour and the number of people, it seems acceptable to the disciples to do nothing and allow the situation escalate into a crisis.

¹¹⁸Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark*, 192.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Robert H. Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 315.

¹²¹Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark*, 193.

¹²²Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, 316.

Rather than relieving the crisis, Jesus intensifies it: You give them something to eat, he orders. As in the case of all the Lord's commands, however, they will ultimately do exactly what he says, although they cannot now imagine how.

The disciples complain about what they lack, Jesus focuses on what they possess. The problem will not be resolved by something beyond them but by something from within them. Jesus sees possibilities where his disciples see only impossibilities, for God can multiply even the smallest gifts if they are made available to him.

Early Christians frequently took their meager resources, gathered them, and created miraculous results with them. Such an experience is not much different among African Americans. Out of nickels and pennies, dimes and quarters, placed repeatedly in offering plates and through bake sales and others humble enterprises, African Americans built educational institutions like Wilberforce University, denominations like the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, health care institutions like Meharry, great houses of prayer like Mother Bethel in Philadelphia, and countless other establishments.¹²³ The story challenges the church not to be overwhelmed by fear, but to trust in the power of God to provide.

Contemporary Application

This passage begins with Jesus expressing compassion for the crowd. Through his teaching and providing of food, Jesus is shown as the Shepherd. The combination represents a variant of the teaching and healing that have been characteristic of all Jesus' ministry. Churches today find it difficult to balance those two aspects of Christian responsibility. Some think that the church' ministry, so the argument goes, is to preach

¹²³Brian K. Blount, *True To Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 105.

the gospel and provide for public worship. This conveys that the social ministries of the church are all that is necessary to make Christ present in the world. Others think that the church should have nothing to do with feeding and healing except when it is necessary to help someone in the local community.

The disciples' role in carrying out Jesus' command is noteworthy, as is their distribution of the miraculous food found later in the passage. Here, as in their mission, they serve as extensions of Jesus ministry. Mission means not simply giving people something to eat but teaching them how to develop the confidence, and external resources that will enable them to feed themselves and others. This metaphorical feeding begins with the soul of the individual and translates literally to providing nutrition the body. This concept further extends to affect the larger community.

A church that has the same compassion for suffering that Jesus exhibited cannot be content with simply and continuously preaching the gospel to the already converted. Christians must also attempt to meet the pressing social and materials needs of others, even if few of those who receive such services ever become members of the church. The mission of the church should coincide with the gospel and all missions should be biblically based.¹²⁴ Not only is it the church's mission to preach and teach the gospel in a dying world, but to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help heal the sick, visit those imprisoned, and empower people to carry on Christ Jesus' mission for the poor, sick

¹²⁴Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *Reclaiming What Was Lost: Recovering Spiritual Vitality in the Mainline Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 84.

afflicted, hungry, and oppressed.¹²⁵ For this reason, Jesus mission and ministry model is one worthy of emulation.

The writer knows of no preacher in America today who has been more forthright in his attempt to give shape and context to the issue of prophetic preaching and the Christian faith than Marvin A. McMickle, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. In his book, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, he writes, “Prophetic preaching must remind people of faith that we live in community with one another, and with that community comes mutual responsibility.”¹²⁶

Historical Foundation

*When the local church has a holistic understanding of evangelism and discipleship done in the tradition of the black church, it is prepared to reach out to all persons with the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and participate in God’s plan to bring spiritual, political, social, and economic transformation to its community.*¹²⁷

The writer’s purpose in writing this section is to show that the Black church, social activism movement ultimately aim was to express prophetic witness. The goal of this section is to identify important implications of prophetic witness from the past that can help sculpt, reshape and challenge postmodern propensities.

Regardless of its imperfections, defects, and deficiencies, the Black church still merits attention and remains the most important social institution in the Black community.¹²⁸ Interestingly enough, Battle boldly and rightly contends that, the gift the

¹²⁵Ibid., 84.

¹²⁶Marvin A McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets GONE?: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 46.

¹²⁷Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *Growing the African American Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 5.

¹²⁸Michael Battle, *The Black Church in American* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 44.

Black church gives to the world is its belief and practice that when any person is mistreated or disadvantaged, an incident of supreme importance has occurred, and something sacred is violated.¹²⁹

Social Activism in the Early Black Church

The nature of the Black church is diverse and comprised of African Christian spiritual principals that emphasize communal practices. This is the message coursing through Henry H. Mitchell's *Black Church: The Long Hidden Realities of the First Years Beginnings*. Mitchell's painstaking and probing treatment reminds us that the early Black church viewed all civic responsibilities as an obligation of Christian service. He concludes that, the anti-slavery or abolitionist movement was the most apparent evidence of the early Black church's concern for its people being in shackles.¹³⁰ Mitchell states that:

The anti-slavery or abolitionist movement, primarily in the North, was led by liberal whites without whose resources and influence coherent struggle by effective agencies would have been almost impossible to sustain. Yet their greatest resources of mass meeting oratory undoubtedly came from African American preachers and laity, who often also served as staff.

The list of famous abolitionist African American preacher/orators includes Amos G. Beman (Congregational), Hosea Easton (A.M.E.Z), Henry Highland Garnet (Presbyterian), Leonard Grimes (Baptist), Nathaniel Paul and Thomas Paul (Baptist), J. W. C. Pennington (Congregational/Presbyterian), and Samuel Ringgold Ward and Theodore S. Wright (Presbyterian).¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 130.

¹³¹ Ibid.

This quotation is quite telling, as it shows that virtually every Black church pulpit spoke from an anti-slavery or abolitionist platform. Every preacher, as well as gifted laity and orator was committed to the cause of social activism.

Mitchell notes that, among the powerfully gifted laity enlisted in the abolitionist cause, were Frances E. W. Harper, Sarah, her brother Charles L. Remond, Lunsford Lane and William Well Brown, who are also well-known in history.¹³² Most noted of all, along with Frederick Douglass, is Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave and stinging orator. Douglass, best known as an abolitionist orator and publisher, was licensed as a local preacher in the A.M.E. Zion Church.¹³³

Equally praiseworthy is Mitchell's insistence that the early Black church was covertly engaged wherever possible in assisting escaping slaves through the Underground Railroad. Mitchell contends that it was a foregone conclusion that any church in the Providence Association north of the Ohio River was a stop or station on the Underground Railroad. The members themselves were free, but instead of moving on further North to better country, they stayed near the border, to assist those not free, which fled the clutches of the Fugitive Slave Act.¹³⁴

Mitchell further notes that Richard Allen's Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia housed concealed quarters that can still be observed today. Jermaine W. Loguen, later ordained a bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church, was a major figure in the Underground Railroad that operated out of Syracuse.¹³⁵ Harriet Tubman a staunchly faithful and

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

supportive member of the A.M.E. Church, the greatest Underground Railroad conductor of them all. She led some 300 souls to freedom in the North.

Mitchell's attention to the early Black church's social activism is highly commended, because, historically, the early Black church is often ignored or slighted in the treatment of the anti-slavery movement. The early Black church's charities and contributions to the anti-slavery movement are rarely mentioned, even among the best and most widely read intellectual white theologians and white early church historians.

E. Franklin Frazier addresses this topic of social activism in *The Negro Church in America*. Frazier considered the Black church to be a nation within a nation. He seems eager to repeatedly remind his readers that the hope of Black people was centered in the Black church. It appears that Frazier felt it necessary to impress this point upon readers. He claims that, "the early Negro church remained a refuge, despite the fact that the Negro often accepted the disparagement of Negroes by whites and the domination of whites. What mattered was the way he was treated in the church, which gave him a platform for self-expression and attaining status."¹³⁶ The early Black church provided an identity for derided Blacks. What was and remains most important is what blacks think of themselves. To think well of oneself is the first act against the abnegation by others.

Social Activism in the Black Church During Early Twentieth Century

Andrew Billingsley's work, entitled, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African American Families*, does an admirable job of discussing how the early Black church in America was not primarily a religious institution, as white

¹³⁶E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 51.

churches were. From the beginning, as Billingsley points out, community service was an important element of Black religious expression.

Billingsley further argues that when Absalom Jones, Richard Allen, and others walked out of the white Methodist church in Philadelphia over two hundred years ago, they did not form a new church. What did result was the forty-two members Free African Society. Billingsley wrote:

The Free African Society fostered socioeconomic cooperation in the form of saving, mutual aid, education to children and charity to indigent, widowed, and orphaned members. Only three years later did Richard Allen form Mother Bethel, the first African-Methodist Episcopal Church in America.¹³⁷

Billingsley affirms that Black churches were a major institutional presence in the Black community. Complete ownership and control by African American people, suggests Billingsley was a key element in the genius of the church. With this thought in mind Billingsley offers this insight:

It represented freedom, independence, and respect for leadership, as well as the opportunity for self-esteem, self-development, leadership, and relaxation. Moreover, they found that the Black church was a community center and recreational center that encouraged education, vocational training, and democratic fellowship beyond its members.¹³⁸

In addition, racism against women of African descent has historically been a targeted assault on Black intelligence and Black beauty, Black capacity and Black potential. Evelyn Higginbotham, in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement In The Black Baptist Church 1880-1920*, documents the critical role African-American Baptist women played in the building of cultural, educational, and social institutions

¹³⁷Andrew Billingsley, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-America Families*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Press, 1992), 352.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 354.

within the African-American community. In the opening paragraph, the author makes her focus very clear by stating, “This book is a study of women in the Black church between 1880 and 1920 a period that has come to be known simultaneously as the woman’s era and the nadir in American race relation.”¹³⁹

Higginbotham clarifies the decisive role of women in “broadening the public arm of the church and making it the most powerful institution of racial self-help in the African American community.”¹⁴⁰ Higginbotham verifies the fact that the church has, throughout history, endorsed men but failed to make similar provisions to promote Black women equally.

Higginbotham supplies evidences to showcase how women were not on the same level as men, although they were the driving force of the church. She notes how, “the study attempts to rescue women from invisibility as historical actors in the drama of black empowerment.”¹⁴¹ From this angle, Higginbotham weaves a connection with the significance of cooperation among southern Black women and northern white women.

The sharing of religious beliefs led white northern Baptist women to offer support for women of African descent education within the African American community. She noted, “*Tiding* and *Home Mission Echo* brought northern women into an intimate acquaintanceship with the white and Black personalities in the field and with the triumphs and hardships of Black communities.”¹⁴²

¹³⁹Evelyn Higginbotham, in *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement In The Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Boson, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

Higginbotham presents detailed information concerning women of color (Baptist women) fighting against racism, showing how the efforts of women made it possible for the church to assemble and construct schools, distribute food and clothes to the poor, advocate protests, boycotts, and assert petitions and verbal appeals to justice. Through these efforts, the strength of women of color during trying times for Black people was made even more apparent made known the strength of women of color during difficult times for Black people.

She notes that, "The masses of black women validated a leadership that arose primarily from their own ranks rather than from the Black male or white female leadership."¹⁴³ *Righteous Discontent* is a concise work of history that examines the role of Black women in the political and social activism in the Black Church.

Gayraud S. Wilmore book, entitled, "*Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African American*," provides a rich and thorough examination of the Black church's wider concerns of mobilizing the community against poverty and oppression. Wilmore devotes special attention to the Black church's social activism movement throughout the nineteenth century.

Emphatically, he points out that the social activism movement was favored among certain educated Black clergymen, whom integrated much of the activity of the mass into the core ideology of racial uplift and moral development and believed that the principal responsibility of the church was to provide a ministry of social service for the needy. Wilmore wrote:

By 1919 the Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago, under Dr. L. K. Williams, had a membership of 8,743, forty-two departments and auxiliaries with 512 officers,

¹⁴³Ibid.

and employed twenty-four staff persons. R. C. Ransom, an outspoken political activist, Institutional AME Church in Chicago, H. H Proctor's First Congregational Church in Atlanta, and the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., in New York, became, in effect, social welfare agencies serving a broad spectrum of the needs of the burgeoning urban populations. The 14,000-member Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, the largest black congregation in the world in its heyday, became internationally famous for its influence in labor relations, politics, housing, childcare and recreation. In 1920 Abyssinian Baptist Church opened one of the first soup kitchens for hungry migrants.¹⁴⁴

Interestingly enough, Wilmore notes how, these institutional churches effectively adapted to the pulse of the cities. As Blacks arrived from the rural communities of the South, they provided adequate ministries, vocational and educational programs and financial resources to aid in the development of effective communities.¹⁴⁵

Lincoln and Mamiya's work entitled, "*The Black Church in the African American Experience*," provides insights into how The Black church's relationship to social activism and tradition are equally important. In their estimation, the period of the great migrations from 1915 to 1950 indicates that the Black churches underwent a period of phenomenal growth. Not only in the membership rolls of the older established urban churches, but also in the founding of numerous new churches, often started in rented storefronts in the poorest sections of the city.

In their study, Lincoln and Mamiya reported that in each city there were a few leading churches whose preachers took a prophetic stance in attempting to meet the great needs of the migrants by using the resources of their church to provide help with

¹⁴⁴Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African American*. Third Edition. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 190.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

food, shelter, clothing, and employment.¹⁴⁶ In addition, theologian Lincoln has called attention to the multiplicity of functions of the Black church. Lincoln is careful to note:

Beyond its purely religious function, as critical as that function has been, the Black church in its historical role as lyceum, conservatory, forum, social service center, political academy and financial institution has been and is for Black America the mother of our culture, the champion of our freedom, the hallmark of our civilization.¹⁴⁷

Anthony B. Pinn's treatment of social activism in *Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, in relation to Lincoln and Mamiya is quite definitive. It covers the range of 1940 to 1970 and, results in more than half of the total Black population living in urban areas. Pinn boldly and rightly contends that the geographic rearrangement of the Black population meant a radical shift from agricultural occupations to blue-collar industrial jobs and service-related work. However, by 1954 this shift had proven of little economic benefit.

Pinn's assessment arrives even before the beginning of the formal civil rights movement, when ministers like Reverdy C. Ransom (AME), Walter Hood (AMEZ) and L. K. Williams (Baptist) worked to keep their churches active in the overall development of Black communities during the Great Migration. By placing their ministries within the framework of the social gospel, they argued that Christianity had social implications that required Christians to work towards the ending of poverty and racial discrimination. Ransom's himself outspoken, responses to critiques of his Institutional AME Church contains a sense of mission and purpose common to all Black social gospellers of this period. In his own words:

¹⁴⁶Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 121.

¹⁴⁷"The Black Church and Black Self-Determination." Paper read before the Association of Black Foundation Executives, April 15, 1986 in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Institutional AME Church of Chicago was not born before its time. It comes to meet and serve the social conditions and industrial needs of the people, and to give answers and solutions to the many grave problems which confront our Christianity in the great centers of population of our people. It is not a dream spun out of gossamer web of fancy; it is not an evasion, an abridgment, or a short-cut method for the realization of Christ and the Christ life in the life of the people.

It is a teaching, ministering nursing-mother and seeks through its activities and ministrations to level the inequalities and bridge the chasm between the rich and poor, the educated and the ignorant, the virtuous and the vicious, the indolent and the thrifty, the vulgar and the refined, and to bring all ages and classes of the community to contribute to the common good.¹⁴⁸

Ransom's strong emphasis for the Black church to live out the social ramifications of the gospel of Christ is in complete harmony with his own rhetoric. In a lengthy yet insightful quotation he notes:

At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the A.M.E Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and serve the needy through a continuing program of (1) preaching the gospel, (2) feeding the hungry, (3) clothing the naked, (4) housing the homeless, (5) cheering the fallen, (6) providing jobs for the jobless, (7) administering to the needs of those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, asylums, and mental institutions, senior citizens' homes; caring for the sick, the shut-in, the mentally and socially disturbed, and (8) encouraging thrift and economic advancement.¹⁴⁹

Social Activism in the Black Church During The Civil Rights Movement

In the 1960's, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. raised the royal consciousness of the nation and the world through his efforts to draw attention to American's injustices to its own citizen. He was subsequently assassinated. However, a righteous indignation's against injustice live on, and a mindset of social justice emerged and has continues to evolve. The writer contend that today's social justice activities flow out of the

¹⁴⁸Anthony B. Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 11-12.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 12.

paradigm popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; he recalled the church to social activity.¹⁵⁰

The civil rights movement helped the Black church regain some loyalty and respect. When the civil rights movement changed the segregation laws and landscape of the land, the Black church stood at the center of this social transformation. In his 1963 book, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Martin Luther King Jr. speculates how white Christians could build churches that were so beautiful to behold and then practice something as ugly as racial segregation within those same structures.¹⁵¹

Those churches, however, were not focused on what was the central social issue of that generation. In fact, members of those churches were the primary reason why racism, segregation, and the rule of law known as Jim Crow could last as long as it did in America.¹⁵² In a subsequent book, *Black Church In The Sixties*, an analysis of the Black church during the Civil Rights Era, Hart and Ann Nelsen share the same perspective. They write, “The opportunity found in the Negro Church to be recognized, and to be somebody, has stimulated the pride and preserved the self-respect of many Negroes who would have been entirely beaten by life, and possibly completely submerged.”¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰James Melvin Washington, *I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches That Changed The World* (New York, NY: Harper Collins), 14.

¹⁵¹Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail: Why I Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1964), 91.

¹⁵²McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone?*, 10.

¹⁵³Hart M. Nelsen and Ann Kusener Nelsen, *Black Church In The Sixties* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 53.

Hart and Ann Nelsen maintain that Mays and Nicholson also saw the church as community center, supporter of education and black business. Perhaps above all was the freedom and social action potential of the Black ministry. Mays and Nicholson believed that with the right leadership, the Negro church had the potential to become the greatest spiritual force in the United States. Perhaps not until the late 1960s would so strong a belief in this singular Black institution be voiced again.¹⁵⁴

In a similar vein, Clark maintains that the church's role in providing personal affirmation and self-esteem for Negroes is great enough to permit them to tolerate almost any degree of personal, theological, or educational inadequacy upon the part of their minister, so long as he holds the church together as a successful social and financial institution.¹⁵⁵ He further suggest that many Negro ministers have, nevertheless, managed to mobilize the positive potential power of their churches and harnessed it for the democratic and idealistic ideologies of religion for effective racial protection and action. It was inevitable that, in addition to their many functions, Negro churches would have a direct protest role. The dreams of heaven that sustained Negroes for so long have been transformed into their hope for life on earth. The role of such Negro ministers as Adam Clayton Powell, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and Fred Shuttlesworth in the Negro protest movement reflects the historical and unavoidable relationship between Negro religion and Negro protest.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 53.

¹⁵⁵Hart M. Nelsen, Raytha L. Yokley, and Anne K. Nelsen, *The Black Church In American* (New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), 144.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

In *Breaking Down Barriers: A Black Evangelical Explains The Black Church*, Dwight Perry does an admirable job of portraying the Black church's role in mobilizing the community. According to Perry, "It was the clergy and the church members who mobilized the civil rights movement. The church served as the central hub and the command center for protests and marches because, in the 1950s and 1960s, the church was still the central institution of the Black community. This was no more evident than in the Montgomery bus boycott that became a model for future civil rights intervention."¹⁵⁷ Perry further adds that, not only did the Black church fill the role of command center for the movement; it also served as a training center. Much of the training for the nonviolent approach to civil disobedience of Dr. King and the SCLC was conducted in churches.¹⁵⁸

Social Activism in the Black Church in the 21st Century

Reflecting on the meaning of social activism, J. Deotis Roberts identifies the mission of the Black Church in the 21st century to be the act of ministering to Black families. He identifies the two aspects of that ministry to be the priestly and the prophetic. Roberts suggests that the priestly ministry of the Black church refers to their healing, comforting, and succoring work.¹⁵⁹

The prophetic ministry involves its social justice and socially transforming aspects. He then proceeds to tell us that these are two sides of the same coin. Personal

¹⁵⁷Dwight Perry, *Breaking Down Barriers: A Black Evangelical Explains The Black Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 106.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁵⁹Deotis J. Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church*. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980), 110.

concerns relate to social concerns and social realities determine the limits of personal freedom.¹⁶⁰

When Reginald F. Davis writes about *The Black Church: Relevant Or Irrelevant In The 21st Century*, he quickly concludes that the Black church cannot afford to fail the community. Davis maintains that if it does, it will forfeit respect and loyalty. He contends that too many people have already left the church, and many more don't see the relevance of the church in their lives. Davis posits the following could be their word,

I was hungry
and you formed a humanities club
and discussed my hunger. Thank you.
I was imprisoned
and you crept off quietly
to your chapel in the cellar
and prayed for my release.
I was naked
and in your mind
you debated the morality of my appearance.
I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your health.
I was homeless and you preached to me
of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.
I was lonely
and you left me alone
to pray for me.
You seem so holy:
so close to God.
But I'm still very hungry
and lonely
and cold.
So where have your prayers gone?
What have they done?
What does it profit a man
to page through his book of prayers
when the rest of the world
is crying for his?¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 110.

¹⁶¹Reginald F. Davis, *The Black Church: Relevant Or Irrelevant In The 21st Century?* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2010), 29.

At the conclusion of the poem, challenging questions are posed for the Black church in the twenty-first century. Davis maintains that the Black church must return to its heritage of resisting the forces of destruction like many of our faith ancestors. His words summarize the great challenge of the Black church in the twenty-first century:

The Black church needs to come to terms with its crisis as a church and reconsider its priorities. If the choice is to champion the case, the first priority is the survival and liberation of African Americans. Inasmuch as the Black church is the largest institution in the Black community, it is the focal point for direction and momentum that the struggle takes.

Everyone will be watching to see how the Black church responds, as we enter the twenty-first century cognizant of the fact that many African Americans live under conditions of genocidal poverty and have lost hope for the future. My prayer is that the Black church will get its house in order and move ahead prophetically.¹⁶²

One Black theology scholar, Dwight N. Hopkins has not been reluctant to say outright that the main institutional hope for African American people remains the Black church.¹⁶³ In his book, *Heart and Head: Black Theology Past, Present and Future*, he acknowledges that since its inception, the Black church has been the oldest, most organized, most spirit-supporting community for Black life and for the potential racial social transformation.

One may ask: just how important is the Black church to the twenty-first century? Hopkins believes that largest pockets of hope on the local level are those Black churches and church-related institutions that preach and practice an inclusive and holistic approach to theology. These churches, Hopkins continues to contend, have carved out a prophetic ministry while impacting both the margins and the mainstream. An extended passage

¹⁶²Ibid., 30.

¹⁶³Dwight N. Hopkins, *Heart and Head: Black Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 47.

from Hopkins' book summarizes his hope for the Black church in the twenty-first century:

The Black church is called to witness on several different levels. On a *pastoral level*, the church is called to minister to the pain and brokenness of a people who are being wounded and are wounding themselves. It is called to witness as a religious institution to practice concrete ways to help the poor, "to make a way out of no way."

On a *theological level*, the church is called to witness, in its way of life, the presence of hope of a righteous God who reveals Godself through the love, hope, and liberation of Jesus the Christ. On a *prophetic level*, the church is called to speak truth to the powerful in America so that those who are put down by the mighty of society will know that there is a balm in Gilead that binds the broken-hearted and battered bodies of the poor.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have attempted to document the incredible achievements of the Black church. The Black church was able to blend seamlessly human conditions with the pursuit of God's peace and justice demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Simply put, those who have been saved bare responsibility to turn around and save their surroundings. The writer's chief criticism that has been made is the derailing of the black church from its traditional role in the oppressed community and challenges it to return to its prophetic role.

The writer contends that people do not necessarily attend a church just because it is located in their neighborhood. People shop for churches just as they shop for clothes or other items. They are looking for a church with a ministry that meets their needs spiritually, physically, and socially.

This criticism is made by Marvin A. McMickle's work, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone?* Much of the strength of McMickle's criticism against preachers and

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

congregations lies in his willingness to raise the difficult questions and challenge widely accepted conclusions. Furthermore, he challenges, both directly and indirectly preachers who fail to emphasize the local church enormous significance in their local community.

McMickle wrote,

Prophetic preaching shifts the focus of a congregation from what is happening to them as a local church to what is happening to them as part of society. Prophetic preaching then asks the question, "What is the role or the appropriate response of our congregation, our association, and our denomination to the events that are occurring within our society and throughout the world?" Prophetic preaching points out those false gods of comfort.¹⁶⁵

The pockets of hope, which can be found in prophetic Black churches, must serve as solutions to the possibility of social and individual transformation for African-Americans affected by race, gender and class in the United States. Each local example shows us the seeds of how full humanity could become if it blossomed.

It is said you will only be remembered for one of two things: the problems you solve or the ones you create. Abraham Lincoln made a difference that changed the world forever, but so did Hitler. Both men are equally remembered; but for which problems do you want to be remembered, the ones you solved or the ones you created? The questions the writer pose are: What will the Black church be remembered for in our contemporary society? Closing their eyes to society's ills? or For reaching down in order to uplift society? Now, in our present-day society, has the black church become less focused on repairing the broken systemic dimensions within their communities and more focused on preaching messages regarding the attainment of economic success and personal prosperity?"

¹⁶⁵McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone?* 2.

In our modern-day society, has the black church begun to lose sight of its foundational calling, rooted in a message of salvation, with the promotion of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness? The writer would argue that the message of the cross as the changing force of all aspects in life has become silenced by the message of the dollar. The Black church, a place where people came looking to receive whole life empowerment, has now become a wealth workshop and capital-industry. Accepting that financial luxury is a component, and some would contend a derivative of the gospel message and it, should not be interpreted as the heart of the message.

Furthermore, as that the educational, economic, and ethnic facade of our culture is changing, the essence of social problems—inequality and non-access for oppressed populations remains the same. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Black church not compromise the message of the gospel with capitalism ideas, that is, it must not become so focused on individualized gain that the essential message of the cross—grace, mercy, and liberty—becomes lost.

In order for the Black church to be remembered for the problems they solved, it must restore its position as a full-service utility that links the work of God with the work of the community. Therefore, the question becomes, what can the Black church do to restore its identity as a city of refuge and a beacon of hope? The calling of the Black church using the honored text of the Christian tradition is best summarized by Jesus' reading of the prophecy of Isaiah, "to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free..." (LK 4:18-19).

Prophetic preaching is designed to motivate people to move beyond lifting up holy hands and begin to extend helping hands to those Jesus describes in Matthew 25 as “the least of these.”¹⁶⁶

The writer contends that above all else, the Black church must return to its first love, the social, compassionate, and liberating gospel of Jesus the Christ. The Black church must stand upon the teachings of Jesus despite the pressure and fascination of contemporary societal fads that serve only to downplay the work of the cross for the influx of capital expansion. The Black church must focus on living the commission of compassion, while also continuing to preach a message of freedom, justice, equality, and hope for all people from all walks of life. It cannot become so entangled within a message of riches that it overlooks the crucial issues of daily life—deteriorating education, unaffordable housing, rising unemployment, marginal healthcare, and several others.

The Black church must never mistake the Sunday morning motions as the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, and social actions that must be taken Monday through Saturday for the full benefit of all mankind. The act of preaching motivates the soul and the melodies of song enlivens our emotions, yet motivation and enlivening are not enough for debt to be eliminated, graduation rates to rise, and affordable housing and healthcare to be attained—all parts of the social crisis.

As part of the Black church—parishioner and clergy—this is the moment to reclaim identity; and when the Black church returns to its mission and restores its

¹⁶⁶McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone?* 85.

identity in this society, only then will it be able to serve as a collective utility of social transformation and positive change for such a time as this.

Theological Foundation

The writer divided this chapter into two sections. The first section is an unpublished article written by one of the writer's Professional Associates' Darrell J. Wesley. In this article, Wesley identifies two different theories of liberation motif of Black theology of liberation to express a single important idea. One theory is that of a *Dissenting Voice*, where the Wesley suggests that a shift took place within Black theology and consequently a decline in the prophetic preaching tradition and witness.

The other theory is *Constructive Voices*, where Wesley theorized that Black churches espouse a liberation motif of Black theology of liberation and Black power, which serves a sort of necessary ingredient for Black pride. Here Wesley offers a brief treatment of James Cone, James Evans and Peter Paris works in Black theology. In the next session the writer provides snapshots of a historical overview of the prophetic witness motif viewed through the lens of the social gospel movement throughout various periods in the history of this country.

Dissenting Voice

The dissenting voice consists of Black religious scholars who offer a passionate argument and critique of the works put underway by the constructive voices of Black religious scholars. These *dissenting voices* have their beginnings in Black theological discourse but stepped out of this discourse to highlight what they consider to be the shortcomings of Black theology and the Black church. Right or wrong, they bring a

different tenor and alternative intellectual fervor to the relevance of the surfaces emergences to prophetic witness. However, Wesley will rightfully argue that, as these dissenting voices continue to come into view, the influence of prophetic witness became less visible.

With the advent of new dissenting voices emerging, Black religion hardly stayed relevant, while the Black Power Movement lost great momentum. From Wesley's perspective, one of the most devastating blows to Black theology was the work produced by Victor Anderson, namely, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay On African American Religious and Cultural Criticism*. According to Wesley, for Anderson, the problem lies when we make ontological blackness normative and when we only think in terms of dichotomies like Black and White (a Black by way the White created) and to reduce Black experiences to notions like struggle, survival and resistance.

Therefore, for Anderson, it is not blackness that must be normative but cultural fulfillment. He laments that Black liberation theology results in an alienated consciousness and contends the sources of Black theology heretofore employed are grotesquely ambiguous. In his own words, his argument is that "the opacity and grotesqueries of these sources keep them ever irreducibly open in African American religious experience as a plentitude of being, meaning, and significance."¹⁶⁷ Anderson further notes:

A primary context of this alienation is the class differentiation of black theologians from others in the community. Socially, we African American theologians belong to an elite class of educated intellectuals who often exhibit bourgeois tendencies that alienate us from the underclass strata of life both in the Black church and in black culture. Black liberation theologians, committed to

¹⁶⁷Victor Anderson, *Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 55.

liberation and radical ideology as regulative ideals of black Christianity, are often alienated from churches from whom they desire to speak but whose piety is characteristically evangelical, reformist, and liberal in disposition, doctrine, and politics. Black theologians are also alienated by class from the strata of Black society, namely, the poor urban underclass, whose voices they want to evoke and whose desperation they now raise as the new rallying call for the advancement of Black liberation and the mobilization of the prophetic witness of the Black theological academy.¹⁶⁸

Wesley's problem with Anderson's critique is that he views the discourse on race is inappropriate in the postmodern moment. Whereas the 1960's and 1970's confronted discrimination, social injustice, and existential misery prompted by characterizations and differentiations, the contemporary setting experiences problems far beyond race.

As a result, Anderson contends that the motifs of liberation, a radicalized Jesus, and a God who sides with the oppressed are hardly relevant. The writer also differs with Anderson's critique and concurs with Wesley's finding. The writer would submit agreeing with Anderson that while there is a new set of difficulties residing on theological frontier, namely: gender, sexuality, economic, and class differentiation. It does not in any shape or form eclipse Black experiences to notions like struggle, survival and resistance. In the words of the hallmark motto that was the driving force during the Civil Rights Movement; injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Constructive Voices

The Constructive voices are those pioneers of the Black theological discourse who offer a new way of conceptualizing theology, giving theology relevance to the experience and existential realities of Black people. When considering the emergence

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 58.

during the middle of the twentieth century, Jim Crow, legal lynching, segregation, and other social and political maladies demand an outcry against the proliferation of such injustices.

This time in history witness the emergence of forms of resistance that precipitated change and a demand for equal rights. The period from 1956-1970 occasioned the rise of the civil rights movement and noted heroism of Martin Luther King, Jr., but of great importance is that, simultaneous with King's rise, is the call for Black Power and Pride.

In his book, *Black Theology: A Critical Assessment And Annotated Bibliography*, James Evans argues that Black Power first received currency at a rally in Chicago in May of 1965, it was this Black Power philosophy that gave oppressed people the wherewithal to demand equal treatment under the law.¹⁶⁹ Champions like Stokely Carmichael and Roy Inness "defined Black Power as the capacity of black people to exercise their God-given rights as human beings."¹⁷⁰ Here Wesley argues that the Civil Rights and the Black Power movement is surfaces of emergences for prophetic witness.

Another surface of emergence was Black religion, which evolved from the remnants of African traditional religions and slave religion. While scholars may differ regarding the relevance of Black Power, they typically agree that slave religion profoundly informed Black American religion. In his critical text, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution*, Albert J. Raboteau highlights the importance that slave religion had on Black religious expressions and experiences and how this religion served as impetus for protest sensibilities (which are the ingredients, as it were, to prophetic witness).

¹⁶⁹James Evans, *Black Theology: A Critical Assessment And Annotated Bibliography* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1987), 1.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

Eventually, it is the combination of Black Power and Black religion that serves as sources for the primary voice of construction and a major authority of delimitation.

In 1969, James Cone published *Black Theology and Black Power*, where he made the principle being Black Pride; *Black Theology and Black Power* underscores the importance of pride and the need for Black people to say no to white oppression. Since the oppressor will not willingly give freedom, Black people, through the Christian gospel, have a right and in fact, an obligation, to demand it. Demanding freedom means resistance and embracing a revolutionary consciousness; the same kind of revolutionary consciousness Jesus possessed. For Cone “the existence of the church is grounded exclusively in Christ; and in twentieth-century America, Christ means Black Power!”¹⁷¹

A year later Cone publishes *A Theology Of Liberation*, which offers an alternative to the normative theological gaze. In this text Cone contends that the sources of Black theology of liberation must be Black religion as well as the biblical texts that highlight God’s activity in liberation. Two biblical narratives seemed relevant and potent to their discourse, namely, the Exodus story and the life and death of Jesus. He also suggests that the hermeneutical principle for Black theology is the conception of an ontologically Black Jesus who understands and empathizes with the suffering of Black people.¹⁷²

Wesley contends that James Cone is not the only constructive voice that sees the integration of Black theology of liberation, and Black Power as vital concerns of Black churches, others constructive voices are James Evans and Peter Paris. According to Wesley, these scholars introduce a new paradigm within theological discourse.

¹⁷¹ James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1969), 104-106.

¹⁷² _____, *A Black Theology Of Liberation* (Maryroll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 110-120.

Evans discusses Black theology in terms of systematic theology, while Paris views Black Power as the impetus for Black theological and religious discourse.

In his book, *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*, Evans introduces his systematic theology by underscoring what he considers to be the task for Black Theologians. Of the three tasks he notes in the book the most relevant task is to clarify the historical, sociopolitical, cultural, and intellectual contexts that affirms African American Christian faith. Of these contexts, the one of most particular importance is sociopolitical. This context accents the relevance and importance of the

Civil Rights and Black Power Movement.

Regarding the Black Power movement, Evans notes that it's most profound contribution to the development of Black theology was the admonition that one could be both Black and Christian. Such admonition was necessary in the face of criticisms given by Black Muslims, Pan-Africanists, and Black Nationalists. All of these argued that Black Christianity as a white man's religion and that it did little to bring liberation and a revolutionary purpose. Evans suggests, however, that the job of Black theology of liberation was to respond to these criticisms and reveal Black theology's efficacy and effectiveness. In his own words he states:

Black theologians were not willing to concede Christianity to its white abusers and based their legitimacy on the fact that African American Christianity was the result of the encounter of black people with the liberating essence of the gospel. Black theologians viewed the history of black resistance to white oppression, and the fact that the leaders of that resistance were more often than not Black Christians, as evidence that the Black theology of liberation was rooted in Black religion.¹⁷³

¹⁷³James Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 4-5.

Like Cone, Evans contends that Black theologians make notions of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit relevant to the lives and existential realities of African American life. This task suggests, according to Wesley that Black theologians and Black churches must serve as a prophetic witness to the world and communities by articulating what moral norms of justice and truth to embrace and which ones to jettison.

A final constructive voice is Peter Paris whose primary concern are the social teachings of Black churches. Like Evan, Paris underscores the moral outcry necessary to tackle maladies like injustice and racism. Also, like Evans, Paris believes that although Black religion must jolt perpetrators to do the right thing, ultimately Black people must take on agency in their liberation. In fact, he suggests that the ethical teachings of Black churches embrace *prima face*, a social Christian ethic. He notes that:

A basic presupposition underlying this volume is that historical experience shapes the nature of theology and ethics. Since religion and morality are respectively the subject matter of theology and ethics, a plurality of the one (that is, either religion or morality) implies a plurality of the other (that is, either theology and ethics). As with all living phenomena, both religion and morality continually change while preserving their basic identities. The aim of each is to set forth some general rules and principles that can be practical guideposts for the enhancement of thought and action in specific context.¹⁷⁴

Prophetic Witness Motif Viewed Through The Lens Of The Social Gospel Movement

The story of the social gospel is one of the most distinctive chapters in the American experience. Historian Carl Degler offers a description of the social gospel movement in *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*. He concludes

¹⁷⁴Peter Paris, *The Spirituality of African People: The Search For A Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 21.

that the acceptance of the social gospel spelled the transformation of American Protestantism.¹⁷⁵ Degler continues to argue that:

Always more than a traditional religious movement, the social gospel stepped outside the churches to intersect the political, social, and economic forces of changing America. The social gospel was born in post-Civil War America, and grew to maturity in the era of Progressivism. Its impact continued long after its demise was forecast following World War I with the coming of the politics of normalcy and the theology of neo-orthodoxy. Emerging with renewed vigor in the turbulent 1960's as one of the not always recognized roots of the variegated social justice movement.¹⁷⁶

Likewise, Walter Rauschenbusch in *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, also provides a useful summary of the social gospel movement. Rauschenbusch describes it thusly:

The social gospel sought to show the relevance of Christian principles to the affairs of persons in the world, both interpersonally and collectively. It seeks to bring men under repentance for their collective sins and to create a more sensitive and more modern conscience. It calls on us for the faith of the old prophets who believed in the salvation of nations. The social gospel is "the old message of salvation" needing a theology.¹⁷⁷

Jesus and The Social Gospel Movement

Bruce J. Malina in *The Social Gospel of Jesus* provides an excellent and thorough analysis of Jesus' social gospel movement, as well as Christian theology and the ethical system, devoting special attention to the social systems of first-century Mediterraneans. He emphasizes: (1) *Kinship* is about nature and nurturing people; it is held together by commitment (also called loyalty or solidarity) and forms a structure of human belonging; (2) *Economics* is about provisioning a group of people; it is bounded by inducement, (the

¹⁷⁵Carl Degler, *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1950), 347.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1917), 5-6.

exchange of goods and services), and forms the adaptive structure of a society; (3) *Politics* looks to effective collective action; it is held together by power and forms the vertical organizational structure of a society; (4) *Religion* deals with the overarching order of existence, with meaning; it is held together by influence; it provides reasons for what exists and the models that generate those reasons.¹⁷⁸ Malina contends that religion forms the meaning system of a society and, as such, it ties into the kinship, economic, and political systems, unifying the whole by means of some explicit or implicit ideology.

The social gospel movement also stressed an optimistic conception of human nature, Jesus Christ as moral exemplar and an evolutionary view of human progress in history. So important was the social gospel to Jesus that Malina concludes that,

Both in New Testament translation (*Abba* = *ho Pater*; Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) *Abba* means father, a term of respect and honor. In a patriarchy, it implies distance as well. God is not daddy but a patron. In the political religion preached by Jesus, the God of Israel is Israel's patron.

Therefore, by proclaiming the Kingdom of God and God as patron, Jesus was presenting solutions to existing social problems. The Kingdom of God would prevail over the widespread ills generated by a malfunctioning or nonfunctioning political system. Jesus' social movement message urged Israelites to endure in the present and look forward to the forthcoming, new political theocracy where God would be Israel's patron.¹⁷⁹

The Early Social Gospel Movement

Early rudiments of the white social gospel may be dated roughly to the 1830's during the antislavery movement under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina and Sarah Grimke and others. In *The Social Gospel in America: Gladden, Ely, Rauschenbusch*, Robert T. Hardy showed that

¹⁷⁸Bruce J. Malina, *The Social Gospel of Jesus: The Kingdom of God in Mediterranean Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 16.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

before, and contemporaneous with these, Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser, David Walker, and Maria W. Stewart, all free Blacks, engaged in their own version of abolitionist activity and social gospel Christianity.¹⁸⁰

Hardy contends that the white social gospel picked up steam by the 1870's and 1880's although its major breakthrough in the churches began to occur in the 1890's.¹⁸¹ Charles H. Hopkins contends, "The social gospel was marked by an evangelical fervor and an ideology looking toward a Kingdom of God raised on earth by a consecrated group of individuals, whereas the former tradition inclined to apply the 'Christian law' of love to the transactions of society."¹⁸²

Before turning completely to the social gospel movement, it will be helpful to summarize basic social gospel ideas. This will be followed by an examination of the social gospel movement in early nineteenth and twentieth century. These discussions provide the foundation for the informing one on social movement in the civil rights period.

In *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism Biblical*, Hopkins concluded that the social gospel was characterized by several key themes:

1. The centrality of the doctrine of the immanence of God. God was though to be ever present in the world, participating with people in working out God's plan and purpose. Science, especially Darwinian evolution, contributed to this emphasis on divine immanence.

¹⁸⁰Robert T. Hardy, ed., *The Social Gospel in America: Gladden, Ely, Rauschenbusch* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1966), 10.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸²Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 318.

2. The focus on divine immanence led rather naturally to a communal view of society, with an emphasis on the interdependence and interrelatedness of people in the world. This in turn implied the equality of all people under God. Such equality before a common Creator-Parent opened the door to the possibility of achieving the Kingdom of God on earth, or the beloved community (a term that was known to Walter Rauschenbusch).
3. There was a focus on the higher criticism of the Bible, and on the solid biblical grounding of the social teachings of Jesus Christ.
4. There was a strong emphasis on the ethical—on the greater good for humankind, especially the achievement of the Kingdom of God on earth; considered as a corrective and a reaction against an extreme otherworldly individualism, the ethicizing strain must be regarded as a healthful influence even though it afforded an opening for the entrance of humanism and moralism.
5. Increased significance of the role of the social sciences, particularly sociology. The focus was on the empirical, *what is*, or the actual state of a social reality, rather than *what ought to be* (i.e., the moral imperative or ought). This put pressure on Christianity to seek a more realistic appraisal of its tasks in the world. In addition, this attention to the social sciences “gave the practical working programs of the movement a new appreciation” for social and environmental causes of social problems.¹⁸³

Strategies for social change were now based more on the empirical findings and conclusions of social scientists. This is an important point. E. Clinton Gardner came to this conclusion in his book, *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics*. According to Gardner, in later years when theologians began trying to define Christian social ethics, the social gospel focus on the role of social science was not forgotten. Nor was its importance lost on Martin Luther King, Jr., who stressed the significance of early fact-gathering in every nonviolent resistance program.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³Ibid., 320-321.

¹⁸⁴E. Clinton Gardner, *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1960), 9.

Furthermore, Gardner contends that any adequate definition of theological social ethics must not neglect awareness of both normative principles and the importance of social science methodology. For example, it is common to hear the theological social ethicist characterize her discipline as the critical study of the difference between *what is* (which points to the importance of the social science emphasis on the empirical) and *what ought to be* (which stresses the importance of normative principles).¹⁸⁵

With the publication of *Christianity and the Social Crisis* in 1907, Walter Rauschenbusch was unexpectedly catapulted into the role leaders for the social gospel movement, and eventually became known as its greatest theologian. Rauschenbusch, the seventh in an unbroken line of ministers, began his career as a pastor in an abjectly poor section on the western edge of Manhattan known as Hell's Kitchen.¹⁸⁶ Sherwood Eddy wrote in his book, *The Kingdom of God and the American Dream*:

Rauschenbusch was aroused from his moral individualistic and conservative tendencies by reading Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Leo Tolstoy, Karl Marx, Sidney Webb, and the English Fabians. So horrendous was the conditions of the working people in Hell's Kitchen that he was compelled to begin reformulating his understanding of the Christian faith.

It was there that he began understanding the connection between the faith and social problems, for by his own admission his social consciousness before this time was underdeveloped. In addition, at the beginning of his ministry he found early that his previous individualistic way of thinking about the faith made no sense in Hell's Kitchen.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

¹⁸⁶Sherwood Eddy, *The Kingdom of God and the American Dream* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 268.

¹⁸⁷Ibid, 268.

Social Gospel Movement During 1877-1925

Reviewing the social gospel climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in his book *Liberty And Justice For All: Racial Reform And The Social Gospel (1877-1925)*, Ronald C. White Jr. determined that the social gospel did not begin as a highly organized movement. Rather, it was a network of several movements operating in different ways. Individuals connected with the social gospel worked through ongoing religious and secular organizations. From time to time, they established study and actions groups of their own. There never was, however, an official organization that represented the social gospel.¹⁸⁸

White discovered several theories used during that period, namely theology, sociology, and anthropology that challenged traditional theories of race and inferiority in implementing strategies for social change. For White these theories merged to give meaning to what became the watchwords of the social gospel: “The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” In the kingdom, all were the children of God and thus sisters and brothers to each other.¹⁸⁹ (1) The Negro Question; (2) Conservatives versus Radicals: Washington and Du Bois; (3) The Church Outside the Churches.

The Negro Question

In the years since the end of Reconstruction, white leaders had been losing interest in the aspiration of Black Americans. Nearly all were convinced that

¹⁸⁸Ronald C. White, Jr., *Liberty And Justice For All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel (1877-1925)* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), xxix.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, xxvii.

reconstruction had been a tragedy, producing sectional sores that only time and diminished voices could heal.

In early June 1890, a group of eighty delegates, leaders in philanthropy, education, journalism, and religion, met at the Lake Mohonk Mountain House in Ulster County, New York, to discuss *the Negro Question*. The place for the conference was conducive to a gathering concerned with both religion and reform. Daily public worship went hand-in-hand with vigorous discussion of reform issues. Lyman Abbott, editor of the *Christian Union* and successor to Henry Ward Beecher as pastor of the influential Plymouth Congregational Church of Brooklyn, alluded to the existing divisions in society, whether they be political, social, economic, religious, or racial, and pointed to a common humanity as the answer to those divisions. To that end, he proclaimed, “There was no Negro problem—only problem of humanity.”

Instead of divisions, Abbott wanted the conferees to focus on “Man—man born of God, made in his image, and with an immortal future before him. With a free field and an open racecourse, let every man find his own place by his own courage, energy, and enterprise. The problem of humanity could best be handled by the actions of the new humanity.”¹⁹⁰

Now that slavery was finished, Abbott insisted that blacks be educated and given a degree of political equality. This tone was also reflected in the comments of former president Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes set the tone for the conference in his opening remarks as he told the delegates, “We seek conscientiously to avoid whatever is

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

sectarian, or that smacks of partisanship or sectionalism.”¹⁹¹ A decade after his presidency, Hayes devoted himself to the cause of Negro Education.¹⁹²

Conservatives versus Radicals: Washington and Du Bois

The debate that developed between Washington and Du Bois was, at the outset an intramural debate, a struggle for the souls of black movement. White notes,

The ascendancy of Booker T. Washington was a mixed blessing for Black Americans. Under his leadership blacks made strides in acquiring education and property but suffered losses in civil rights and political rights. Even as Washington was being elevated to leadership, in part by whites who said he was the only one with whom they would deal, he was being challenged from within the black community.

The primary challenge came from one who was at first sympathetic to Washington’s goals and strategies, W. E. B. Du Bois. Within a decade, Du Bois became the intellectual center of a challenge to Washington and “the Tuskegee machine of industrial education,” of hard work, thrift, and Christian character—all favorite words in the Washington lexicon. W. E. B. Du Bois couldn’t have had a more different origin or destiny. Du Bois placed more emphasis on the priority of political and civil rights.

As he developed his educational views further, Du Bois became more forceful in his criticism of industrial education. Du Bois’s assessment was that Washington “arose as essentially the leader not of one race but of two, - a compromiser between the South, the North, and the Negro.” Washington had steered a course from which he could “gain sympathy and cooperation of the various elements comprising the South” as well as gain allies for his ideas in the North.

The price of that compromise was steep. “Mr. Washington’s programmed practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races.” To put it bluntly, Du Bois contended that Washington was asking black people to give up—at least for the present period—three things: political power, insistence on civil rights and the higher education of Negro youth.” Du Bois invited black leaders and others to join a new movement that would “ask the nation three things: (1) The right to vote; (2) Civic equality and, (3) The education of youth according to ability.”¹⁹³

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid.

The Church Outside the Church

In a book authored in 1910, George W. Coleman, a Baptist layman, writing for the Northern Baptist Social Service Commission, encouraged his readers to discover the Social Gospel outside the walls of the churches in a host of these news organizations.¹⁹⁴ He observed that, “the social gospel was a prominent feature in what he called people’s gatherings staring up in the first years of the new century.”¹⁹⁵

White contends that the theological foundation for the vocation of ministers as reformers was grounded in the renewed emphasis on the Kingdom of God. He notes,

The fresh emphasis on the kingdom of God pointed to possibilities beyond the churches and voluntary societies. The kingdom of God is larger than churches. Its content is defined by the ethics of Jesus. The gospel imperative is to help bring those ethics into being in the neediest places in society.¹⁹⁶

Theologians and the Social Gospel Movement Upon Cultural

H. Richard Niebuhr in his book *Christ & Culture*, explicitly portrays the Kingdom of God as being both against and about culture:

The primary source of the law is Jesus Christ. There are other laws beside the laws of Jesus Christ; and they are also imperative, and also from God. To deal with this duality as cultural Christianity or radical faith do, is to take neither Christ nor culture seriously enough; for they fail to do justice either to the earnestness of Christ or to the constancy of the Creator, and each failure involves the other.

We cannot say, “Either Christ or culture,” because we are dealing with God in both cases. We must not say, “Both Christ and culture,” as though there were no great distinction between them; but we must say, “Both Christ and

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

culture,” in full awareness of the dual nature of our law, our end, and our situation.¹⁹⁷

Like Niebuhr, Paul Tillich concluded cultural changes occur by the inner dynamics of the church itself. In chapter 5 of his book, *Theology of Culture*, Tillich proposed several key questions: “How should the church deal with the spirit of our society which is responsible for much of what must be healed by the Christian message?” and “Has the Church the task and the power to attack and to transform the spirit of society?”¹⁹⁸ He suggested that,

In its prophetic role the Church is the guardian who reveals dynamic structures in society and undercuts their demonic power by revealing them, even within the Church itself. In so doing the Church listens to prophetic voices outside itself, judging both the culture and the Church in so far as it is a part of the culture. But the Church should also stand as a guardian against the demonic distortions into which attacks must fall if they are not grasped by the right subject our ultimate concern.¹⁹⁹

The Christian doctrine of love is important for Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Love is an essential concept and virtue in Bonhoeffer’s theology from beginning to end. He was concerned about the nature and practice of it. For Bonhoeffer, love is like the “tie that binds” Christianity in fellowship. Love reaches out to all persons in the family of humankind.

Therefore, he gave some serious attention to love ethic in the social gospel and Christian movement. In his work, *The Communion of Saints*, Bonhoeffer views the moral command to love as not specifically Christian, but the reality of love is present only in

¹⁹⁷H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ & Culture* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1951), 122.

¹⁹⁸Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1959), 50.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 50-51.

Christ and his church. The following is a summary of Bonhoeffer's views of Christian love and the social gospel movement:

1. Christian love is possible only through faith in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are to surrender our will to Christ and make no claim on God or our neighbor.
2. The Christian loves the real neighbor. This is a significant point. The Christian loves another human, not because of his or her attractiveness but because that person acts as a thou and makes the Christian experience God's claim in this thou. In other words, love is not directed to God in the neighbor but to the concrete thou. We are not to love the neighbor in God's place or to love God in the neighbor. Instead, we are to put the neighbor in our own place and to love the neighbor rather than ourselves.
3. Christian love knows no limits. We love others by placing our entire self at their service. It seeks the realization of God's lordship. God's commands to love our neighbor must be obeyed with reservations.²⁰⁰

Social Gospel Movement During The Civil Rights Period

Martin Luther King, Jr. becomes a paradigmatic case of kind of prophetic fervor needed facilitate hope and healing within Black communities. King took his social gospel training from Boston University and used it as a weapon against violence, struggle, and oppression. In an essay "The Prophetic Christian as Organic Intellectual: Martin Luther King, Jr.", Cornel makes the following observation:

The Unique status and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. is that, as a black Baptist minister, he embodies the best of American Christianity; as an organic intellectual, he exemplifies the best of the life of the mind involved in public affairs; as a proponent of nonviolence resistance, he holds out the only slim hope for social sanity in a violence-ridden world; as an American prophet, he commands the respect even of those who opposed him; and as an egalitarian internationalist, he inspires all oppressed peoples around the world who struggle for democracy, freedom and equality.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith et al. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1963), 40-44, 118-136, 120-122.

²⁰¹Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas, 1999), 434.

To be sure, Dr. King remains one of the last bastions of hope for prophetic Christian witness and the appropriation of the social gospel. Though there are some prophets still left, the preponderance of pain in Black communities reveal that there is absolutely much work to be done.

King's version of the social gospel had a much stronger element of equality of among races than that of white social gospellers. In this regard, he was much closer to the social gospelism of late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century African Americans such as Reverdy Ransom, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Francis J. Grimke (nephew of Sarah and Angelina Grimke), Henry McNeal Turner, the venerable and all but forgotten socialist preacher George Washington Woodbey, and his eager disciple Reverend George W. Slater, Jr., who converted to socialism when he heard Woodley lecture on how only socialism could help eradicate poverty.²⁰²

Like Woodbey, Darryl Trimiew rightly contends in his body of work, *The Social Gospel Movement and the Question of Race*, that King's social gospel project was a continuation of his black ancestors Christian struggles for freedom and equality for Blacks and for the creation of a multi-ethnic, multiclassed society.²⁰³

²⁰²George Washington Woodbey, *What to Do and How to Do It, or Socialism vs. Capitalism*, in *Black Socialist Preacher*, ed. Philip S. Foner (San Francisco, CA: Synthesis Publications, 1983), 80.

²⁰³Darryl M. Trimiew, "The Social Gospel Movement and the Question of Race," in *The Social Gospel Today*, ed. Christopher H. Evans (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 36.

The Social Gospel Today

In an essay, entitled *The Kingdom of God, the Church, and the World: The Social Gospel and the Making of Theology in the Twentieth-Century Ecumenical Movement*, by Melanie A. May. She states the following:

Sketching the significance of the social gospel in the twentieth-century ecumenical movement, and surveying more recent trends, it seems likely that the ecumenical movement in the twenty-first century will be quite different. There will be new structures, new ways of thinking theologically, and the churches will be called to new ways of witness in the world. Nonetheless, the originating insights of a theology for the social gospel are that the saving power of the Church does not rest on its institutional character, on its ordination, its ministry, or its doctrine. It rests on the presence of the Kingdom of God with her, and that the kingdom of God is active in the flow of history; not only in doings of the Church. thereby theologies for the social gospel will be born that can indeed continue to be catalytic and creative for the making of ecumenical theology in the next century.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

In summary, the social gospel encouraged America to put its faith to work on behalf of the physical, everyday needs of African Americans, particularly those problems resulting from the Great Migration. While some neglected the physical needs of migrants, preferring to preach personal salvation, a small number of churches worked to continue the tradition of racial uplift through job training programs, housing, educational opportunities, and child care. The emphasis on social Christianity hit a high point during the Civil Rights movement when churches provided the meeting space, resources, and bodies necessary to undertake nonviolent direct action.

Marvin A. McMickle, often critical of the demise of prophetic preaching in America, maintains that in the face of all that is currently happening in our world, it is

²⁰⁴Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel Today* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 52.

shocking that the voice of the prophetic is too rarely heard. The fiery words of the prophets, however, go unspoken in most pulpits across America. McMickle' continues to put forth, biblical texts taken from the prophetic corpus are often employed in weekly sermon, but the power and the pathos are not heard or felt.²⁰⁵ McMickle's further contends there is a homiletical equivalent to that question that says:

*Where have all the prophets gone?
Gone in search of megachurches, every one.
Where have all the prophets gone?
Gone in search of faith-base funding, every one.
Where have all the prophets gone?
Gone in search of personal comfort, every one.
Where have all the prophets gone?
Gone in search of political correctness, every one.
Where have all the prophets gone?
Gone into a ministry that places praise over speaking
truth to power, every one.
When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?*²⁰⁶

McMickle's argues the point being made here is that prophetic preaching is absent from the scene because too many of those whose responsibility it is to raise the issues of justice and righteousness have grown distracted and preoccupied with other topics and other aspects of ministry.²⁰⁷

This study, has endeavored to highlights the social gospel movement on the church's role and responsibility to uplift the social order. Author Melanie A. May concludes that, "Only by working together ecumenically could the churches, by the

²⁰⁵Marvin A. McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 7-8.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

power of God's Spirit, upbuild the Kingdom of God in a world of great social and spiritual upheaval."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸Evans, *The Social Gospel Today*, 39.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

As noted in the theoretical foundation chapter of this research project, prophetic preaching can be a catalyst for developing a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community. This chapter includes a summary of the purpose, hypothesis, survey questionnaires, and project design that guided this Doctor of Ministry Project. A brief rationale for the use of qualitative research methods explains the design of the ministry intervention model and instrumentation and prepares the reader for the description of field experience, which follows in the next chapter.

Purpose

This study explores the concerns, questions, and developments that occurred during the course of this project at Cecil Memorial UMC and explains them in narrative form.

Hypothesis

As observed in chapter three, some literatures in the field suggest that prophetic preaching is critical for combining a community-focused church with a community strategy. In other words, regardless of the variables in community type, ethnic makeup, financial conditions, and all the rest, prophetic preaching is essential for developing and sustaining a community focus and becoming a successful church.

Therefore, the hypothesis for this ministry project centered on if the Cecil Memorial UMC embraced prophetic preaching as a call to action, then the congregation will develop into a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local community. More precisely, prophetic preaching is effective in transforming a person's values and behaviors. It results in Christian compassion where one ministers to everyone regardless of race, religion, abilities, or circumstances. A community-focused church makes disciples. Its emphasis is on the ministry, how to meet people where they are spiritually, and mature them through spiritual transformation.

Survey Questionnaires

The first phase of this project was the administration of a sermon series survey questionnaire to the focus group to measure the impact of prophetic preaching as a means of developing a community-focused church. The writer utilized a Likert Scale model to develop the survey questionnaires. The second phase of this project was the administration of a pre-and post-test questionnaire to the participants.

The writer selected this particular model because of its ability to measure attitudinal changes, which would be the writer's primary means of validating, negating or testing the writer's hypothesis. Further, the use of the Likert Scale model allowed the writer to test the hypothesis that if the congregation embraced the core component of prophetic preaching as a call to action, then it will develop the participations into a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local community. It should be noted however that the actual questionnaire allowed for one of five responses: agree, disagree, strongly agree, strongly disagree or not sure.

The writer gained invaluable assistance and insight from the context associates, particularly in forming the questions. The context associates were able to share their most prevalent concerns, apprehensions, issues, and questions with the writer within the particular context.

For the entire month of September 2011, the writer informed the congregation of the research project and solicited participation. The results reflect the participation of fifty persons. The pre-test questionnaire consisted of 10 questions based on the Likert Scale. The writer based the questions on participants' general understanding of prophetic preaching, prosperity preaching, and the role and responsibility of the church to their local community. The writer designed the questions to detect how effective the participants viewed prophetic preaching as a call to action and means of developing a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community.

The post-test questionnaire consisted of the same questions used in the pre-test questionnaire. This approach mitigated the possible skewing of data needed to measure attitudinal changes among participants that could have occurred if the post-test questionnaire included a different set of questions than those used in the pre-test questionnaire.

Based upon the high regard with which prophetic preaching has been heard and understood within the context of the church, the writer anticipated affirmation of the hypothesis in the pre-survey results. Thus, any attitudinal shifts between the pre-test and the post-test would be minimal. However, should the pre-survey not support this assumption, the post-survey should adequately gauge attitudinal changes of the project participants.

The Project Design

As noted above, the writer worked with the context associates to develop a specific plan of action for mission movements beyond all institutional and denominational walls and faithfully demonstrate the good news of the Kingdom of God. During the meetings, the researcher introduced the concepts of prophetic preaching as a catalyst for developing a community-focused church and presented church models measured not by their beliefs but by their actions.

This approach to right religion in general can be credited to authors Kinnaman and Lyons's research in *Unchristian: What A New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity*. Kinnaman and Lyons concluded that "the outsiders' most common reaction to the faith is that Christians no longer represent what Jesus was really about and that Christianity in its current expression is not what it was meant to be. Christianity has become bloated with blind followers who would rather repeat slogans than actually feel true compassion and care."¹

The writer's goal was to engage the congregation in order to acquire candid feedback concerning their understanding of true mission and ministry evangelism beyond the typical Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets given to persons in the local community. In addition, the writer introduced this concept of a "community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community," to determine if something could be done to generate a new attitude or outlook toward the local community.

Therefore, the writer opted to use Bible study classes as a central part of the research design, believing that it would provide the best opportunity for constructive

¹David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What A New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 15.

dialogue, questions and answers, feedback, and comments with members of the congregation. This setting also allowed the writer to lead fruitful discussions, tread new grounds for theological reflections and to engage the congregants in questions they could answer without feeling awkward or embarrassed in their responses and/or answers.

The four-week Bible Study Series, entitled “Apathy To Action,” consisted of biblical interpretations of Amos 5: 21-24 and Mark 6: 30-44 (special emphasis on verse 37), the social activism work of the historical Black Church, the theological perspective of the Social Gospel Movement and Black theology, the role of Black clergymen, the Black church and the Black community. After each session, the context associates received a Bible Study Observation Worksheet to give feedback regarding the material and subject matter presented.

The purpose of this ministry model is to provide a replica or prototype for assisting inward-focused congregations that have grown apathetic in their attitudes and actions toward their local communities. It will also help to develop not only a conscience but also, more importantly, a compassionate heart that will lead them to act and lift a helping hand in meeting the needs of their communities. In addition, it will begin a course of action for re-establishing the creditability of the church in the eyes of the local community. The focal goal of this project is to develop a model that will bring about an attitudinal change, from being apathetic to rediscovering the mission and ministry of the local church.

Project Assumptions and Potential Limitations

The writer made several assumptions during the course of this project. The writer assumed that:

1. Becoming a community-focused congregation was the desire of the members of Cecil Memorial UMC. They made this clear through informal conversations with the context associates.
2. Members of the congregation were eager to understand the nature of the 21-century church and its mission and ministry to the local community.
3. Members of the congregation would be willing to openly discuss their apathetic outlook toward the community and discover what it means to be a community-focused church.
4. The writer's relative newness to the ministry context would not adversely affect the project.

Methodology

The writer implemented the methodology for this project in four stages. The first stage was the contextual input stage. The second stage was the informative session stage. The third stage was the implementation stage. The fourth stage was the invitation/insightful study stage. The information that follows provides an explanation of each stage as well as the rationale for selecting each phase.

Input Stage

The input stage involved participation from the context associates. The context associates, comprised of members of the church, were identified because of their potential interest in assessing the perceived disconnect with the community. They not only have the privilege, but more importantly, the responsibility of assisting the congregation in making a major paradigm shift from inward church-focus to an outward community-focused church.

The writer chose the input stage because it gave context associates the opportunity to express their ideas concerning the project and make suggestions for the four-week

Bible Study Series, entitled “Apathy To Action.” The context associates previously participated in local leadership training workshops, Bible study classes, church programs, and community think tanks.

Therefore their experience and knowledge provided very valuable insight. Additionally, this stage allowed community personnel, who did not regularly attend our worship service to provide insight regarding the kind of community-focused church and ministries they preferred. Their input was extremely helpful, particularly since the writer designed the model to benefit them.

During the meeting the context associates created and designed a pre-and post-test questionnaire, consisting of ten questions.² Each question addressed some aspect of prophetic preaching and the church relationship and responsibility to the local community. For example, participants were asked their opinion concerning prophetic preaching, prophetic witnessing, and prosperity preaching. In addition, there were questions concerning their view of the image of church in the community, what constituted a thriving church and how to begin to minister to people that lived beyond the church walls and the membership list.

The writer and the context associates agreed to mail a letter to each member of Cecil Memorial UMC requesting their participation in the four-week Bible Study Series “Apathy To Action.”³

²See Appendix B.

³See Appendix C.

Informative Session Stage

The second stage involved two important dynamics: a meeting with context associates and a meeting with elected City Of Annapolis official, Ward 3 Alderman, the Honorable Classie Gillis Hoyle.

Planning meeting with context associates.

The planning meeting with the context associates project took place on Wednesday, September 14, 2011, at Cecil Memorial UMC. The purpose of the meeting was twofold:

1. To provide the context associates the opportunity to express their concerns about the project.
2. To decide on the best course of action that would ensure the overall success of the project.

The context associates expressed several concerns in the meeting.

1. First, they acknowledged that the congregation had become tremendously internally focused and desperately needed to rediscover the message and ministry of the church to the local community.
2. Second, they voiced their dissatisfaction with the many self-contained practices and programs of the church. As a result, they felt this had contributed greatly to the perceived disconnect with the local community.
3. Third, they articulated that in order to become a community-focused church, it was essential to actively network and create partnerships with community agencies, public schools, and government and non-government organizations.

Once the context associates voiced their concerns, they suggested a three-point outline for the four-week Bible Study Series “Apathy To Action.”

1. They agreed that the timeframe of each session of the four-week series would be one hour and fifteen minutes (the last fifteen minutes reserved for questions and comments). Each session would concentrate upon a particular aspect of prophetic preaching as it related to becoming a mission and ministry-minded congregation.

2. They decided that after each session the context associates would successfully complete and submit to the lead context associates the Bible Study Class Observation Forms.⁴
3. They suggested that we include several outreach missions and community ministry events for the local community throughout the four-week Bible Study Series period.

Meeting with elected City Of Annapolis official,
Ward 3 Alderman, the Honorable Classie Gillis Hoyle.

The purpose of this meeting was for the writer to introduce himself and brief the Alderman of Ward 3, the Honorable Mrs. Classie Hoyle, on what transpired in the planning meeting with context associates and members of the congregation. The writer felt this meeting was incredibly necessary before launching any community events sponsored by the church.

Establishing a rapport with the City of Annapolis elected official Alderman Hoyle and her office was critical in order to obtain city permits and licenses to host community events. She gave her blessings and acknowledged that she was willing to help in any way possible.

Implementation Strategy Stage

The context associates agreed that the “Apathy To Action” four-week Bible Study Series should be advertised. This was very important for several reasons. In order to increase the attendance of not only members of the congregation, but members of the community as well, they needed information about the Bible Lesson Series. Advertisements were deliberately intended to build a relationship between the church and

⁴See Appendix D.

the community. The church used every available form of publicity including the following:

- A. A letter to each parishioner of the congregation.
- B. Broadcasts on local radio and news stations.
- C. Weekly email announcements. Since a great deal of information concerning the weekly activities at the church is distributed through email, the context associates thought this would be a good way to publicize the Four-Week Bible Study Series, “Apathy To Action.”
- D. Weekly announcements at the beginning and ending of Sunday morning worship service.
- E. A notice on the marquee situated in front of the church. This was a very good form of publicizing because everyone who drove by the church would inevitably see this announcement.
- F. Local newspapers ads, magazine ads, and announcements.
- G. Social networking websites: Facebook and Twitter.

Invitation/Insightful Study Stage

After planning and organizing the Bible Study Series, the writer personally visited different members of the congregation and invited them to attend. Since visitation is an integral part of the writer’s ministry, the context associates thought that these visitations might help persuade more members to attend the Bible Study Series. Largely, the overall design of the project is to determine if prophetic preaching may possibly develop a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in their local community. This project design included a Project Course Syllabus of Bible Study Series for the next four weeks.⁵

⁵See Appendix E.

Why A Qualitative Approach

Why? This method was most effective because it is natural setting. According to John W. Creswell in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, one advantage of the qualitative approach – researchers tends to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study.⁶

Creswell further stated,

This up close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research. In the natural setting, the researchers have face-to-face interaction over time.⁷

Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. Then the researchers review all of the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources.⁸

Exit Interview With the Context Associates

This phase of the project also included a face-to face exit interview session with the twelve context associates. During this session, the writer dialogued in detail with the context associates concerning the issues, the project origins, their uneasiness, and the feelings they were experiencing as a result on the project. Specific attention was given to means of properly addressing the issues. The writer also asked the context associates to

⁶John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, 2009), 175.

⁷Ibid., 175.

⁸Ibid.

reflect on the Bible Study Series, as well as the final post-survey questionnaire and to participate in an exit interview at the conclusion of the project.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

This chapter will discuss what actually happened during the implementation of the project. The goal is to provide an explanation concerning the objectives of this project, the demographics, and then a discussion of the data collection methods employed, which will be followed by an analysis of the data and the end result findings. Upon the conclusion of this chapter, the reader should have a complete understanding of what transpired during the implementation of the project model and the findings.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the project is to develop a community-focused church that would begin to mobilize ministries in the local community. Prior to the implementation of this project, there was an estranged relationship between Cecil Memorial UMC and the community. Frequent discussions with the context associates and members revealed that the main reason why the church was not actively involved in ministering to the local community was due largely to the fact that many members of the church did not reside in the community.

According to author Carl S. Dudley, this presents a serious problem for assessing the needs of the community. In his book, *Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry*, part two, “Congregational Identity,” he proposed that “with a solid base of information and community contacts, your committee has probably become aware of the most urgent

individual needs and the most dysfunctional systems. You have a good sense of where you might begin developing social ministry and some idea about how much work may be involved.”¹

The need to re-establish a relationship with the community was imperative and was a priority that was certainly long overdue. The writer/pastor and the context associates organized a systematic plan of action at Cecil Memorial UMC in Annapolis, Maryland. After four weeks (the month of September 2011) of hearing sermons regarding the church’s obligation to the local community, the church was now ready for a four-week Bible Study Series, entitled “Apathy To Action” implementation phase of the project. The sermon series was amusingly entitled “From Apathy To Action: What Will It Take To Stir ‘U’ Up?”² The aim of the sermon series is to empower the congregation on the concept of prophetic preaching and being a community-focused church through biblical preaching, precepts and principles. There were four sermons preached to shift the congregation from being a lukewarm church to a congregation on fire, fulfilling the mission of Christ and meeting the needs of those in the local community. The four sermons were, *From Apathy To Action - Lukewarm Preachers*; Amos 5: 21-22, *From Apathy To Action – Lukewarm Parishioners*; Amos 5: 23-24, *From Apathy To Action – Lukewarm Praise*; Mark 6: 30-37 and *From Apathy To Action – Lukewarm Prophetic Witness*; Mark 6: 37-44.

The sermon series emphasized the importance of shifting the congregation’s mission and ministries upon the marginalized people in the local community, who had experienced some form of oppression, alienation and injustice. The objective of the

¹Carl S. Dudley, *Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry* (The Alban Institute, 1997), 43.

²See Appendix F.

sermon series was twofold: (1) to teach members that the church's approach to missions and ministries, in response to human need and suffering, reflects a natural expression of their faith in God; (2) to challenge the congregation's conscience to rethink the fact that not only members of the church, but the people within the local community, are and should be the focus of our concern and compassion as a local church.

The writer administered a sermon series questionnaire form to twenty-five lay leaders of the congregation to measure the overall effectiveness of the sermons upon the shift in the overall attitudes among the members of the church. The lay leaders were asked the following questions:

Question 1: Members clearly understand that prophetic preaching is a call to action?

Question 2: Members sensed a holy discomfort that will inspire them to do great things for God and people in the local community?

Question 3: Members are ready to make the shift from being an inward-focused church to being an outward-focused church?

Question 4: Members now understand their responsibility to share their faith by participating in prophetic Christian witness?

Question 5: Members realize the significance of developing ministries that meet the needs and interest of people in the community?

Question 6: Members are aware of the need to go against popular religious and traditional culture (*counter-culture*) to truly demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ?

Question 7: Members understand the importance have a social consciousness and spreading God's vision of inclusion and not exclusion to people in the local community?

FOCUS GROUP FOUR-WEEK BIBLE STUDY SERIES “APATHY TO ACTION”

Interestingly, the focus group, the context associates, and the church participants were extremely supportive and very understanding of the necessity of not only participating in the four-week Bible Study Series but to also recruit more members of the church and the community to participate as well. In making daily visitation and phone calls, the writer personally invited everyone he encountered to attend. The writer, as well as the context associates, documented the following objectives for this project:

- A. To inspire our congregation to accomplish The Great Commandment (Jn 15: 12-13) and The Great Commission (Mt 28: 18-20).
- B. To re-establish a positive relationship with the Parole community and to restore the perceived disconnect between the church and the community.
- C. To educate our congregation through the uses of Biblical principles and insights, how to shift from being an inwardly focused congregation to an outwardly focused, community-focused church.
- D. To strategize a course of action for creating outreach missions and ministries in the local community that the members can actively take part in.
- E. To carefully listen to the member's concerns and fears as it relates to involving themselves by participating in outreach missions and ministries in the community.

Below is a precise overview of each of the four Bible Study Series lessons administered during the course of the project. The Bible Study Series lessons have been included for the simplicity of the reader.

Bible Study Series – Lesson 1: Our Mandate As A Church To The Local Community.

The Biblical text used for this lesson was Amos 5: 21-22. This Bible lesson provided the participants with an accurate understanding of the fundamentals of prophetic preaching. Prophetic preaching is a call to action. By pointing out those false gods of

comfort and convenience, it seeks to provide a model for how congregations can take action and meet the needs and interests of people in the community. This lesson also offered a Biblical model of a prophetic preacher in the form of the prophet Amos.

The discourse began by the writer proposing a Drawing Near/Opening Thought regarding a finding by Marvin A McMickle in *Where Have All The Prophets GONE? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching In America*. According to McMickle,

Prophetic preaching also never allows the community of faith to believe that participation in the rituals of religious life can ever be an adequate substitute for that form of ministry that is designed to uplift the 'least of these' in the world. The words of Amos and Micah, the eighth century B.C.E. prophets come immediately to mind. Both of them condemned Israel because that nation seemed more in the acts of animal sacrifice and the observance of religious feast days than in the poverty and economic exploitation that impacted the lives of so many people in the society.³

The writer then stated the goal of this project is to re-established the perceived disconnect between the church and the community. This endeavor is a call to action. It seeks to provide a model for how congregations can take action and meet the needs and interests of people in their community. Subsequently, an energetic dialogue ensued. Several of the participants argued that not only have these gods of leisure and uncomplicatedness infringed upon the role of the church to the local community, but also as a result both institutions to a great extent have been disadvantaged.

For example, many of the middle-aged participants (30 years old to 55 years old) have been among the staunchest critics of the inwardly focused programs of the church, who feel stigmatized by the church's non-existence in the Parole community. Support for an outwardly focused, community-focused church came from most notably the middle-aged group who understands the overwhelmingly need for programs and ministries in the

³McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets GONE?* 3.

community. The middle-aged group of participants also contends that the apathetic attitude and outlook maintained by the vast majority of the members have no positive benefits in terms of re-establishing the disconnect between the church and the community and will only result in further isolation by residents in the community.

The participants were then divided into five small groups. Each small group was then asked to decide upon the following tasks: a facilitator, (responsible for ensuring that each member of the group participated in the dialogue/discussion), a recorder (note-taker for the group), a timekeeper, and a spokesperson for the group. The groups were given fifteen to twenty minutes to discuss the Reaction Questions. The assigned spokesperson for the group would stand up and report the findings to the entire class (the same group discussion procedure was used for each session). The following Reaction Questions were proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants.

1. Is God interested in our relationships with others or just our sacrifices? Read Matthew 5: 23-26.
2. What steps can you take to practice true Christianity through your words, your ways, your walk, and your worship?
3. Why is it important to help others? How is helping others part of our Christian faith? List ways you can reach out to someone in need in your immediate circle.

The Bible Study Lesson ended in prayer. The context associates successfully completed a Bible Study Workshop Observation Form at the end of the session (the same group discussion procedure was used for each session).

Bible Study Series – Lesson 2: Our Mission As A Church To The Local Community

The Biblical text used for this lesson was Amos 5: 23-24. This Bible lesson provided practical ways in which the congregation could respond to the needs of individuals and families in the community without reflecting upon the demographic changes in the surrounding areas of the church. This Bible lesson also discussed how to shift the focus of the congregation from being inwardly focused and driven, to what is happening to them as a local church in the Parole community.

In the introduction of the lesson, the writer advanced the following argument, “The mission and message for following Jesus are clear. Jesus defined the parameters for the church mission in his inaugural address (message) at Nazareth.”⁴

The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”⁵ (Lk 4: 18-19, quoting from Is 61: 1-2).

Moreover, the writer indicated that Jesus has already given us the action items that will be measures for the church evaluation on God’s final exam.⁶

For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you gave Me clothing, I was sick and you took care of Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.” Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when was it that we saw You hungry and gave You food, or thirsty and gave You something to drink? And when was it that we saw You a stranger and welcomed You, or naked and gave You clothing? And when was it that we saw You sick or in prison and visited You?” And the

⁴Mike Slaughter, *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission Of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), xiii.

⁵*The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, Michael D. Coogan, Editor (Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 103.

⁶*Ibid.*, xiii-xiv.

King will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to Me⁷ (Mt 25: 35-40).

Immediately after the reading and exegesis of Matthew 25: 35-40, the participants were quick to respond and equate the efforts of the church regarding being faithful to the message of Jesus and fulfilling His mission. One participant responded that she felt that indeed the church did not actively participate in ministries to the local community until participating in the process of this project, which encouraged positive action in the Parole community. Another participant replied that the prior pastor, administration, and church council did not urge or foster an increased awareness in this community. Out of callousness, lack of sympathy for people in this community, indifference, or incumbent self-interest, the church has failed to provide the needed resources, outreach programs, and ministries in increasing advancement opportunities for people in the Parole community. Thus, the indictment leveled against Cecil Memorial UMC of not aggressively fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the Parole community with a strong commitment to social justice is indeed valid.

The participants were then divided into five small groups. The following Reaction Questions were proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants:

1. Does the definition of justice in the 21st century begin and end with just these two issues: abortion and human sexuality (same-sex marriage)?
2. How would the Prophet Amos define Church- ianity vs. Christianity?
3. What are some places where Jesus’s followers can venture into uncomfortable places to act in love for people they’ve never met?

⁷Ibid., 48.

The context associates successfully completed a Bible Study Workshop Observation form at the end of the session.

Bible Study Series – Lesson 3: Our Ministry As A Church To The Local Community

The Biblical text used for this lesson was Mark 6: 30-37. This Bible lesson provided Biblical principles for outreach ministries in the local community. This lesson reminded the participants that ministries of compassion and justice do not happen until someone cares enough to act. Dudley has rightfully noted that, “People launch community ministries because they care—not just rationally, but with powerful compassion.”⁸

At the outset of this lesson, the writer explained to the participants in great detail the difference between being compassionate and just being concerned.

For the purpose of this project, to aid the understanding of the participants, the researcher defined the word *compassion* as moving to action or causing one to act on someone else’s behalf. And the word *concerned* the researcher defined as simply being disturbed but not acting on another’s behalf. To enhance the understanding of the participants, the researcher supplemented this in the lesson plan. Authors Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, in *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons From The Greatest Leadership Role Model Of All Time*, is on the point in support of the researcher’s comprehension of the word compassion. As Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges indicated:

Being Compassionate like Jesus involves the alignment of Christian domains: *heart, head, hands, and habits*. The *internal domains*—the motivations of your *heart* and the Christian perspective of your *head* are things you keep inside or even disguise if it suits your purpose. The *external domains*—your public Christ-like behavior, or *hands*, and your *habits* as experienced by other—will determine

⁸Dudley, *Basic Steps Towards Community Ministry*, 1.

largely whether people will respect you. When your *heart, head, hands, and habits*, are aligned, extraordinary levels of loyalty, trust, and productivity will result. When these areas are out of alignment, frustration, mistrust, and diminished long-term productivity will result. The four domains of being compassionate like Jesus are the following:

(1) *Heart*, Christianity is *first* a spiritual matter of the *heart*. Whenever you have an opportunity or responsibility to influence the thinking and the behavior of others, the first choice you are called to make is *whether to be motivated by self-interest or by the benefit of those you are serving*;

(2) *Head*, The journey to leading like Jesus starts in the *heart* with motivation. Your intent then travels through another *internal domain, the head*, which examines your *beliefs and theories about serving, leading and motivating people*;

(3) *Hands*, Others will experience and observe what is in your *heart and head* when your motivations and beliefs about Christianity affect your *actions (hands)*. Good religion is like good football; it isn't all talk, *it's action*.

(4) *Habits*, Your *habits* are how you renew your daily commitment as a Christian to *serve others rather than to be served*. As a Christian committed to serve despite all the pressures, trails, and temptations He faced, how did Jesus replenish His energy and servant perspective?

His habits! Through a life pattern of solitude and prayer, knowledge of the will of God expressed in His Holy Word, Jesus was constantly refreshed and renewed.”⁹

The participants were then divided into five small groups. The following reaction questions were proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants.

1. Is there a difference between being concerned and being compassionate? If so, what is the difference?
2. What acts of human suffering move you towards being compassionate?
3. Do you believe there is a lack of compassion in the Lord's church today because members often pick and choose what they will and will not be compassionate about?

⁹Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons From The Greatest Leadership Role Model Of All Time* (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 2005), 31-35.

The context associates successfully completed a Bible Study Workshop Observation form at the end of the session.

Bible Study Series – Lesson 4: *Our Methodology
As A Church To The Local Community.*

The Biblical text used for this lesson was Mark 6: 37-44. The Bible lesson challenged the participants to test their Christian values and their commitment to God, as to their actual involvement in ministry. This lesson also designed the mission and ministry volunteer roles for upcoming community project's sponsor church, trusting that members would embrace these community projects believing they had not only the time but the talent also to successfully carry them out.

This Bible lesson provided the participants with a rich historical overview. From the beginning of slavery to the 21st century, the Black church as always maintains it is social activism, social justice element, and liberating theology aspect as a defining mark of its rich legacy. The writer theoretically supposed that with this wealth of material made known to the participants, that they would emerge from this four-week study seeking to build a community-focused church that values compassion, generosity, and humility above power, wealth, and prestige.

Before the session began, during the writer's preliminarily remarks, the writer stated one of the desired outcomes of this project was the reconciliation between this church and the community. The researcher envisioned a time when those in the local community will worship and serve beside those members of this church, each recognizing that their worth and significance can be only found in Jesus Christ alone.

The writer then proceeded with the lesson outline, by arguing effectively that the Black church is still one of the most spirit-supporting communities for potential spiritual

and social transformation. The writer's central concern is the derailing of the Black church from its traditional role and challenges it to return to its prophetic role of social activism and social justice. This particular Bible study lesson devoted special attention to the social activism of the early Black church. The researcher identified the priestly and the prophetic roles as two main aspects of mission and ministry made available by the Black church.

For the duration of the questions and answers, the feedback (now often referred to feed-forward) and comments period of the lesson, several members raised their hands to express their thoughts and ideas. One participant suggested providing long-range goals, but in the meantime short-range goals such as visiting one of the senior citizens centers in our area, a free clothes giveaway or ministering to those residents residing at the local homeless shelter that is within a five minute drive from the church building. Another participant commented that we must be careful not to make statements that are only idle lip service for the opportunity to share the good news of God's grace with those in this community. A different participant voiced her agreement with the proposal of taking small steps or short-range goals to establish an effective outreach ministry program. She further added that, "If the congregation started with a small, short-term outreach ministry that it would eventually build the confidence of the member as to what we could do as a congregation."

The participants were then divided into five small groups. The following reaction questions were proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants.

1. Does the church today sound like the Black church during the civil rights era? Why or why not?
2. What responses are stirred in you after studying Black church's traditional role of social activism, social justice, and liberating theology?
3. Considering the current state of our church, do you feel that it will be relevant or irrelevant in the 21st century?
4. What do you hope and/or wish for our church?

The context associates successfully completed a Bible Study Workshop Observation Form at the end of the session.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

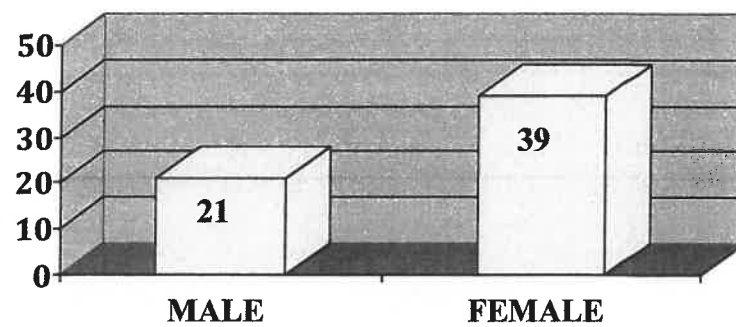
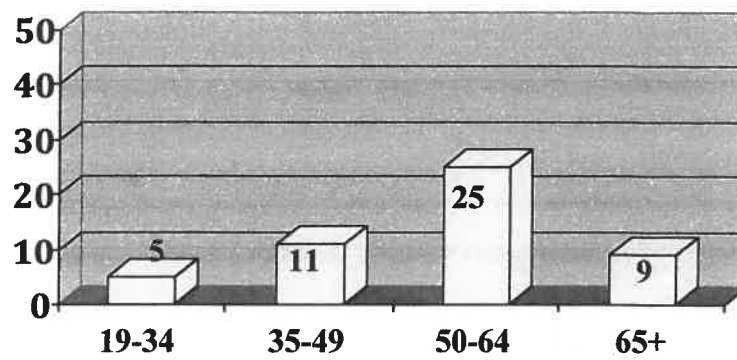
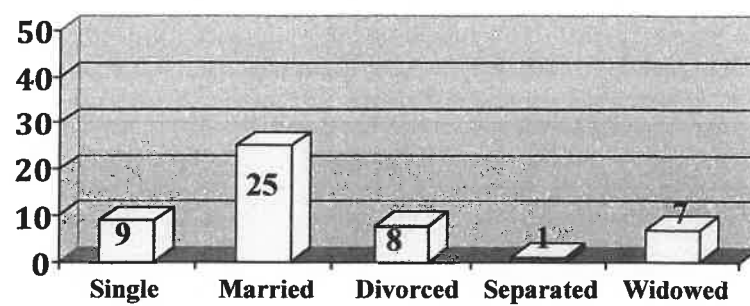
A member of the context associates administered the pre-test survey questionnaire on Wednesday, October 12, 2011, at the beginning of the first lesson of the four-week Bible Study Series. Fifty participants were asked their prior knowledge of and to make self-assessments to the best of their ability on the following subject matters: prophetic preaching is a call to action; the effects of the prosperity gospel movement upon parishioners; the role and responsibility of the church in their local community; the outreach missions and ministries of the church that benefit those in need; a traditional view of Christianity vs. a progressive view of Christianity; the image of the church in the eyes of the local community, what does it mean to be a thriving church in the local community?; the difference between an inwardly-driven church and an community-focused church; what is the mission and the message of the church to the local community?; and is the church's commitment to outreach defined by their beliefs or by their actions?

The post-test survey questionnaire was administered to fifty participants by a member of the context associates given on Wednesday, November 2, 2011, at the end of the fourth and final lesson of the Bible Study Series. The procedures used in the administration of the post-test survey were conducted in the same manner as the pre-test survey.

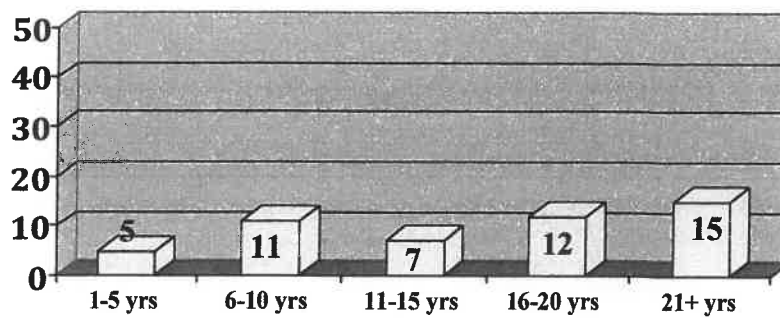
THE DEMOGRAPHICS

To the surprise and certainly to the joy of the writer, fifty members not only actively participated in the four-week Bible Study Series, but also faithfully attended the four-week Sermon Series and the Leadership Training Workshop. Each participant was asked to partake in a Demographics survey form. The survey form consisted of seven questions regarding the participant's background history. In order to have an accurate assessment, the writer ask the participants not to disclose their names on the forms and advised the participant's to answer each question with as much forthrightness and integrity as possible. To the delight of the writer each participants agreed to comply with the writer's instructions and successfully completed the Project Participants' Background Information Form.¹⁰ The demographics of the test study group are detailed in the following graphics:

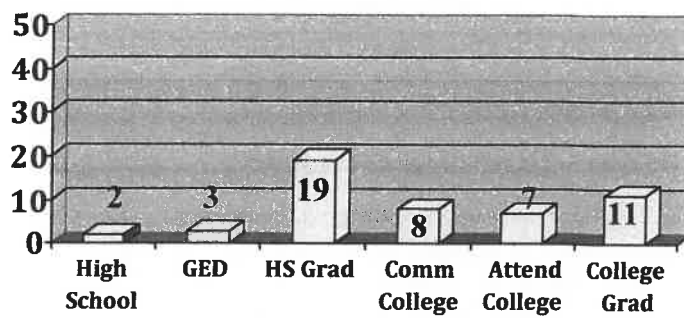
¹⁰ See Appendix G.

GENDER**AGE****MARITAL STATUS**

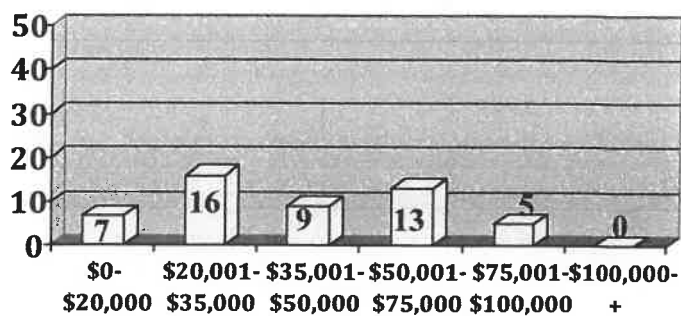
YEARS CHURCH MEMBER



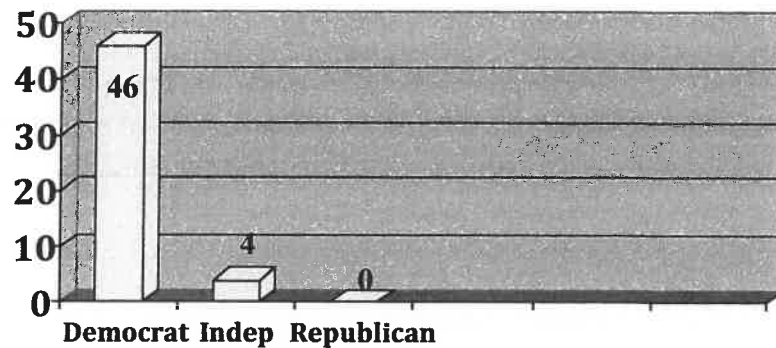
EDUCATION BACKGROUND



GROSS INCOME



POLITICAL AFFILIATION



DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Before the data collection, the writer explained to the participants the role, duties and the responsibility of the context associates. The writer also personally and openly thanked the context associates for their abiding assistance and unfailing reliability throughout the duration of the project. The three major components of the data collected were as follows: (1) the sermon series questionnaire to twenty-five lay leaders, (2) pre-test and post-test survey questionnaire unto fifty congregation participants (focus group), and (3) a exit interview with the twelve context associates.

DATA ANALYSIS OBJECTIVES

There are several key emphases in the Data Analysis that should be identified and discussed. This is what John W. Creswell was getting at in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Creswell stressed that, “Data analysis involves collecting open-ending data, based on general questions and developing an

analysis from the information supplied by participants. It is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data.”¹¹ An examination of the data should also help to clarify some of the methodological distinctions the writer employed in this study. In the analysis of the data, the writer and contextual associates focused on the following areas:

1. What changes were there, if any, from the pre-test survey to the post-test survey?
2. What did the subjective questions on the pre-test survey reveal?
3. Did the data show the impact and substantial effect on the post-test survey?

DATA ANALYSIS

This section will underscore two important things. First, it will compare and elaborate on the results of the survey questionnaire. Each part of this section will end by highlighting the conclusions drawn from the results. Second, it will provide a clearer understanding of the effects of prophetic preaching in transforming the participants’ personal perspectives, values, and behavior. As noted earlier, fifty members of the church participated in the study. The questions designed are to collect baseline information regarding participants’ baseline knowledge and viewpoints. The pre-and post-survey questionnaires asked the participants to provide self-assessment in the following areas: Questions 1, 2, and 3 assess the participants’ understanding of the disparity between prophetic preaching and prosperity gospel. Questions 4 and 5 assess the participants’ perception about traditional Christianity, holding on to old values and progressive Christianity, breaking-out beyond the walls of the church building. Questions 6 through 10 assess the participants on two fronts. (1) Their willingness to shift from being an

¹¹John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 184.

inwardly - driven focused church to a community-focused church, and (2) their commitment to missions and ministries not in terms of beliefs, but in actions.

Q1: I have a clear understanding that prophetic preaching is a call to action.

PRE: 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 62 percent agreed

POST: 48 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 50 percent agreed

Q2: The focus of many churches today has shifted from prophetic Christian witness to getting your own praise on.

PRE: 22 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 62 percent agreed

POST: 40 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 48 percent agreed

Q3: Many pulpits and the pews today are being lured into the prosperity gospel movement and denying Biblical precepts and principles.

PRE: 28 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 48 percent agreed

POST: 34 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 58 percent agreed

Q4: It's very easy to get stuck in the religious habit of just going to church.

PRE: 48 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 50 percent agreed

POST: 62 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 38 percent agreed

Q5: Would you agree that being a Christian is to be empowered and to empower others?

PRE: 44 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 56 percent agreed

POST: 52 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 48 percent agreed

Q6: Do you feel when the church changes the way it does ministry, our image in the community will change?

PRE: 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 66 percent agreed

POST: 36 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 60 percent agreed

Q7: Do you believe we are God's sent-out ones into the world to serve others?

PRE: 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 68 percent agreed

POST: 54 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 46 percent agreed

Q8: Do you think thriving churches pour themselves into serving people in their local community?

PRE: 16 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 54 percent agreed

POST: 46 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 40 percent agreed

Q9: If people do not resemble us or share the same faith, do you feel they are still our neighbors in need of assistance?

PRE: 42 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 58 percent agreed

POST: 46 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 54 percent agreed

Q10: Do you believe that the mission of the church is to teach people how to develop their internal and external resources?

PRE: 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 68 percent agreed

POST: 42 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 54 percent agreed

The data suggests notable positive change in the cumulative responses of the questions with the exceptions of questions six and nine. At first glance questions six and nine could be viewed as unenthusiastic and fairly even responses until the particulars of the questions are analyzed. Question six addressed the participant's understanding of the

manner or methods in which the church engages in outreach programs and ministries to the community, greatly affect how the community views the church.

Perhaps it would have appeared that the focus group participants should have unmistakably understood their responsibility of expanding their impact upon the community beyond the Sunday morning worship service, the lack of an significantly higher response would not negatively influenced their awareness of actively participating in missions and ministries in order to become a community-focused church.

Questions nine also have an unenthusiastic and fairly even response. Question Nine addressed the participant's belief that they are called to minister unto and meet the needs of people regards of race, gender, sexuality, economic, and class differentiation. It was the hope of the writer that once the data was collected and analyzed for the posttest that these three questions who have yielded a slightly higher response.

The chief or central premise of this project maintains that if Cecil Memorial UMC embraced prophetic preaching as a call to action, then the congregation will develop into a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local community. Comparing the pretest to the posttest self-assessments, fifty of the fifty participants indicate personal growth in their understanding of the core component of prophetic preaching as a call to action. The pretest and the posttest was a qualitative study that examined the statistical relationship between the precursor and outcome knowledge among the participants. The pretest and the posttest data suggested a strong parallel exists between prophetic preaching as a call to action and the participants enthusiasms to develop a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local community.

EXIT INTERVIEW WITH THE CONTEXT ASSOCIATES

The writer conducted an exit interview with the twelve context associates at the conclusion of the four -week Bible Study Series “Apathy To Action.” The exit interview involved four structured and general open-ended questions that would require the contextual associates to response verbally. The rationale for the interview was to elicit the viewpoints and opinions from the context associates regarding the overall success of the project. By utilizing the qualitative research method to further analyze the response from the data, this would provide a precise understanding of the context associate’s journey throughout the duration of the project. The writer shared with the context associates that their responses would be kept confidentiality and therefore to response to the questions with as much frankness and openness as possible and to the best of their ability. The following response was a core consensus of the context associates:

Question 1: Do you feel that the Bible Study Series influenced the participants to become a more social conscious church by actively participate in missions and ministries to the local community?

Question 2: Do you feel as a result of the Bible Study Series that the participants knows the subtle difference between demonstrating true compassion and just being concerned?

Question 3: Do you think the participants is willing to live boldly and to step outside their comfort zones to serve those in the local community in order to become a community-focused church?

Question 4: Do you think the participants realized their role and responsibility to the local community demonstrate the Kingdom of God on earth and to couple the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with good deeds?

THE RESULTS OF THE SERMON SERIES

The “*From Apathy To Action: What Will It Take To Stir ‘U’ Up*” sermon series afforded the twenty-five lay leaders of Cecil Memorial UMC to assess whether or not the sermons were beneficial to the congregation and of assistance to the project. To the delight of the writer all twenty-five lay leaders were able to assess and provide feed-forward on the sermons in a helpful manner. The twenty-five lay leaders are comprised of the following chairpersons, co-chairpersons, committees presidents and vice presidents: lay leader, lay speakers, recording secretary, lay member to annual conference, finance chair, financial secretary, treasurer, trustee chair, SPRC chair, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, United Methodist Youth Representative, coordinators for children’s, youth, adult, family, communications, health and wellness ministries and superintendent of Church School and Sunday School.

The twenty-five lay leaders gather on Sunday, September 25, 2011, soon after the end of the fourth and final sermon in the fellowship hall of Cecil Memorial UMC to evaluation the aforementioned sermon series survey questions. The following are their assessments and findings: The results of the data suggest that: 100 percent of the lay leaders believes that the members clearly understands that prophetic preaching is a call to action; 97 percent of the lay leaders felt that the members sensed a “holy disturbance or discomfort” that would inspire them to participate in outreach ministries to the local community while 3 percent disagreed; 98 percent of the lay leadership believes the members is ready to shift from being an inwardly-driven focused church to becoming a community-focused church while 2 percent disagreed; 100 percent of the lay leaders felt that the members clearly understands their role and responsibility as a church to the

community; 100 percent of the lay leaders believes that the members clearly realize the significance of developing ministries that meet the needs and interest of people in the community; 75 percent of the lay leaders felt that the members are aware of the need to go against popular religious traditions or counter-culture to truly demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ while 25 percent disagree; 100 percent of the lay leaders believes that the members understand the importance have a social consciousness and spreading God's vision of inclusion and not exclusion to people in the local community.

At the conclusion of successfully completing the sermon series survey questionnaire, the vast majority of lay leaders freely participated in a dialogued concerning the sermon series. The writer noted a core consensus among the lay leaders that prophetic preacher was unmistakable a call to action. While dialoguing with the lay leaders they affirmed the need to begin to shift the culture of the congregation from being an inwardly driven church to becoming a community-focused church. It was stated by one leader, "it's time for the door of this church to be open to the community seven days a week and not just on Sunday mornings between 11:00 A.M. and 12:30 P.M." Another lay leader this church quickly agreed and stated, "as a we can start to reconnect and rebuilt of relationship with the Parole community by doing small outreach programs that would bless the people in this local community." Others were challenged to fulfill their role as a lay leader of the church and not to just hold an official title. But to activity motivate members on their committees to buy-in and support the vision of the pastor/writer in developing the congregation into a community-focused church. This evaluation was most helpful to the writer, because it provided additional insights for re-establishing the perceived disconnect between the church and the community.

THE RESULTS OF THE EXIT INTERVIEW

At the conclusion of the project the writer held an exit interview with the twelve context associates. The aim of the exit interview was to provide the context associates an opportunity to evaluate the overall success of the project. The writer was interested in hearing their feed-forward and input concerning the impact the Bible study upon the culture of the church. It should be noted that the context associates were unbiased and impartial and in their response to the four questions. The results from the data of the exit interview are the following: 100 percent of the context associates believes that the Bible Study Series influenced the participants to actively participate in missions and ministries in order to become a community-focused church; 100 percent of the context associates felt that the participants of the Bible Study Series clearly understands the difference between being demonstrating true compassion and just being concerned; 98 percent of the context associates believes that the participants of the Bible Study Series are willing to live boldly and to step outside their comfort zones to serve those in the local community in order to become a community-focused church while 2 percent disagreed; 100 percent of the context associates felt that the participants of the Bible Study Series realized their role and responsibility to the local community is to demonstrate the Kingdom of God on earth and to couple the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with good deeds?

As a result of measuring the data collected the writer concludes that the context associates is certain that the project has definitely influenced the members of Cecil Memorial UMC to make some necessary internal changes in order to meet the goal of developing into a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local

community. Through the data received the context associates credits prophetic preaching as a call to action as the single driving force for moving the church from apathy to action and for the participants to re-establish a healthy relationship with the residents of the Parole community. Due largely to the data findings the context associates concurs that the church realizes the importance of demonstrating true compassion and to develop missions and ministries that meet the needs and interest of people in the community. The context associates have deduced from the results of the data that the members of the church clearly understands their role and responsibility to engaging (couple) the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with good deeds (acts of love) in the local community. Based on the outcome of the data, the writer is convinced that members of Cecil Memorial UMC will finally develop into a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the local community.

DATA VALIDITY ANALYSIS

John W. Creswell states, “The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data.”¹² To verify the credibility of the data collected, the writer selected three sources: a sermon series questionnaire, a pre/post test questionnaire, and an exit interview questionnaire, to ensure the quality of the data collected and give leverage and magnitude to support the data conclusions.

¹²Ibid., 183.

On November 12, 2011, data collection copies from all three sources were given to three selected outside observers who were asked to interpret and find common themes, categories, and images, identify patterns and particularistic findings consistent with all three sources. The outside observers were chosen based upon their prior experience in statistics and research methodology. The outside observers began by gathering detailed information, deduced/interpreted the data collections, and then fashioned their findings into common themes or patterns. The following themes or patterns emerged from the three sources of data collection:

Observer 1

After comparing the three different views of data the common response is evident that prophetic preaching is a Call to Action. The next point of note is that participant's knowledge was definitely increased. This was very evident in the data responses to the pre-post questionnaires, within the study and their participation. Given the data, it appears that the participants demonstrated a deeper understanding of what it means to be called to action. As can be seen from the data there has been a social consciousness transformation, a shift in the attitudes of the congregation and an understanding that in order for the church to succeed in the community, work must be accompanied by proper attitudes and service. That service must expand beyond the walls of the church and into the community and that the church must display genuine compassion for those in the community.

Observer 2

The correlation between Prophetic Preaching and A Call to Action is evident. The data shows how prophetic preaching speaks the truth with power. This is of particular

importance because it seems this project has encouraged members to stand up and take personal inventory and to focus on the needs in the communities not just on themselves and their congregation. You cannot miss the correlation variables between Prophetic Preaching and the Call to Action. After reviewing the data it clearly shows the increase of social consciousness between demonstrating true compassion from simply being concern. After reviewing the data it clearly shows the increase of consciousness between compassion and concern. The data shows that the goal of the project was met and greatly exceeded the expectations. It appears that the congregation has learned to be responsible and accountable for reaching out to those in the local community. It also appears that the congregation clearly understands their role and responsible as a church is to take their ministries, and compassion beyond the walls of the church building.

Observer 3

The representation of the data showed a common thread regarding prophetic preaching to be a Call to Action. The validity of the data was evident throughout the process, which has forced the participants to have a more social conscious awareness. A social conscious to stand up and take notice what our active role is as a church in the community. It would appear from the data that the church has been forced to shift its focus from being an inwardly—driven focused church to an outward community-focused church. As can be seen, the impact of the Bible Study Series has caused a shift in attitude from apathy to action within the congregation to wrestle with these issues in our genuine compassion and concern reaching beyond the walls to our local community. The data shows the old attitude of apathy has made the congregation uncomfortable to continue simply doing merely the same status quo. In fact, it appears it has encouraged them to

move from just hearing the message of the good news of the gospel to spreading the message with good deeds and acts of love to those in most need.

After the completion of the data interpretation by the three selected outside observers, the writer met with the context associates on November 12, 2011, for a twofold purpose: (1) to discuss the interpretations and findings of the data collections by the three selected outside observers and get their assessment; and (2) to validate whether their interpretations and findings of the data collections authenticate the writer's hypothesis. In addition, the writer's objective was to use context associates checking to determine the trustworthiness of the three outside observer's findings and whether they agreed their findings were accurate.

Creswell notes, "Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study."¹³ The context associates combined their assessments and developed a group consensus of emerging themes. The overarching themes resulting from the contexts associates were the following:

- Prophetic preaching is a call to action
- The good news of the gospel must always be coupled with good deeds
- Demonstrating genuine compassion is vastly different from simply being concern
- Shifting from an inwardly—driven focused church to a community-focused church begins with having a greater social consciousness.

¹³Ibid.

The key themes emerging from the data of the sermon series questionnaire, the pre and posttest survey questionnaire and the exit interview were, prophetic preaching is a call to action, demonstrating genuine compassion involves engaging the good news with good deeds, and developing a community-focused church begins with a greater social consciousness awareness.

The themes deduced from the pre and posttest survey questionnaire indicate an increase in the participants understanding of prophetic preaching as a call to action (question 1), and increase in the participants understanding that thriving churches pour themselves into serving people in their local community (questions 5 and 8), and a greater awareness of just how easy it is to get stuck in the religious habit of just going to church (question 4).

The context associates determined the data reflects a positive shift in the church culture as a direct result of the four-week sermon series and the four-week Bible Study Series. The four themes identified reflect the main recurring themes among the lay leaders, focus group (context participants) and the context associates' assessment of the data and supports these concepts as essential to developing a community-focused church mobilizing ministries in the community, hence, confirming the writer's hypothesis. In addition, the writer is completely grateful of the data suggesting that prophetic preaching is a call to action and will aid greatly in the developing of a community-focused church to mobilize outreach mission and ministries that will meet the needs and interest of people in the local community.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will begin by elaborating on reflections made in the field experience. Second, there will be a brief discussion concerning one way in which the model was modified during implementation. Third, there will be a discussion of the lessons learned during the implementation of the project. Finally, there will be a brief summary of the Model for Ministry proposed in this project.

Reflections Made in the Field Experience

Although this is a finished product for a Doctor of Ministry Project, it is realized that there is always room for further growth and additional improvement. The aim of this project has been to explore the effects of prophetic preaching as a catalyst for developing a community-focused church to begin mobilizing ministries in the local community. Considering the importance that the writer placed on this hypothesis, it is the hope of the writer that it may indeed assist other pastors to actually use this approach to transform inwardly driven congregations to develop into community-focused congregations.

In exploring the tenets of a community-focused church, the writer has argued that this agenda of social activism, social justice, and a Black theology of liberation must continue to be a vital part of the Black church if it is to remain relevant in the 21st century. In chapter three the writer concentrated on three specific areas of the Black

church the social activism, the social gospel movement, and a black theology of liberation. White theologians tend to make assumptions about The Black church and/or Black theology that are often remarkably unsophisticated.

It is clear, even on the most superficial theological analysis that these assumptions are substantiated in any satisfactory way and will stand up under any sort of scrutiny. Hopefully, however, white theologians will increasingly be concerned to study the works of the Black church and A Black theology of liberation, in an effort to equip themselves with substantial theology assumptions. It is with this aim in mind that the writer has devoted the first portion of chapter three purposely to a Black theology of liberation.

Overall this project proved to be a very positive experience. The decision to use several members, who attended the four-week Bible Study Series to serve as the context associates as well, was quite helpful in two ways. First, their insight and input were valuable by and large to the success of the project. Since they were all members of the congregation, they were able to provide feed-forward and firsthand information regarding the image of the congregation in the eyes of the Parole community and their apathetic attitude toward the community.

Second, they were excited and honored that they were asked to not only participate in but to work closely with the writer on such an important endeavor. They viewed themselves as invested or complete partners in this project. Not only did they view this endeavor as a project for a Doctor of Ministry degree, they also thought that this was also a good and beautiful opportunity to not merely make the members uncomfortable and move to action but to motivate them to reshape their attitudes toward the local community and grow in their personal walk with the Lord.

The project exists to shape and guide certain behaviors in order to develop a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community. As the four-week Bible Study Series contributed to the congregation's transition from an apathetic outlook towards the community, to a more community-focused church, the context associates felt a sense of pride and ownership as they not only witnessed transformation, but also experienced this evolution.

To watch this transition and transformation was an unbelievable experience. As each Bible study lesson occurred, one could sense the energy, the excitement, and the enthusiasm steadily increasing. These results were equally satisfying to both the writer and the context associates. Those members who became a part of the four-week Bible Study Series during the implementation of the model acknowledged how much they truly enjoyed the Bible studies. However, they noted that their satisfaction equally came from the increase in Bible study class attendance and the Bible Study Series itself.

Needless to say, throughout the project the context associates experienced more ownership of the model. Additionally, they helped organize, create, and plan for the project and worked closely with the participants. At the conclusion of the project, they were highly motivated and began casting new prophetic ministries and developing a new vision for outreach ministries with the local community.

In the case of the participants, they were extremely encouraging and very supportive. Within the life of the congregation there was a very different outlook and attitude toward the community than previously espoused. It was a feeling of compassion, confidence, and optimism that Cecil Memorial UMC had turned the corner. Rediscovering the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ and re-establishing a relationship

with the community was the way. The congregation's vision for the community was more inclusive. It seemed that the congregation learned valuable lessons from participating in the Bible Study Series.

The following missions and ministries were born in the community as a direct result of the study.

- A. Hosted a Community Men's Prayer Breakfast, in which over 150 men both from the congregation and the community were in attendance.
- B. Hosted a Community Ash Wednesday Worship Service, in which over 250 people from the community and neighboring congregations were in attendance.
- C. Hosted a Warm Winter Nights Relief Program for the Homeless. The congregation housed, fed, entertained, and ministered to thirty-five homeless people in our building for two days.
- D. Sponsored two free clothes giveaway drives for the community. One drive was a free winter coat giveaway, and the second was a spring clothing giveaway.
- E. Partnered with the Mills-Parole Elementary School in the community to start a mentor program working with at-risk youth. The school principal and the school guidance counselor identified ten at-risk youth from needy families that the congregation will commit to ministering to throughout the school year.
- F. Sponsored a Back To School school supplies drive and donated the supplies to the Mills-Parole Elementary School.
- G. Sponsored a Free Church-Community Festival at the Mills-Parole Elementary School, in which over 300 people from the community participated in food, games, outdoor gospel concert, and a church vs. the community softball game.
- H. Started a quarterly Outreach Sunday morning worship service at the Lighthouse Homeless Shelter in the Parole community. We suspended our entire Sunday worship service in our church building and relocate the worship service to the fellowship hall at the Lighthouse Homeless Shelter. In addition, each Sunday morning the church van picks up residents from the shelter to worship freely in our church building.

- I. Started a quarterly Outreach Saturday morning worship service at the Spring Hill Health Nursing Home Center.
- J. Started An Elementary/Middle School Tutoring Program entitled, "I CAN" (Creating Achievers Now) for kids in the community. The tutorial program meets every Monday evening from 6:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Modifications of the Model

One small change occurred during the field experience. The change had to do with the actual adjustment in the time allotted for the duration of Bible Study. The initial objective was to limit the Bible Study to one hour from 7:00–8:00 P.M. However, after meeting with context associates, they noted that the dialogue and/or discussion of the Reaction Questions within the small groups were very interactive and highly engaging. Therefore, the writer and the context associates decided to extend the Bible Study by an additional thirty minutes. The adjustment time became 7:00 P.M. through 8:30 P.M.

Lessons Learned

No matter how many other possible practices or courses of action might have been employed to explore the writer's hypothesis, the objective of the present analysis is constructive to the writer's advantage rather than detrimental to the writer. The goal of this project was simply to justify the claim that prophetic preaching is an indispensable catalyst for developing a community-focused church to mobilize ministries in the local community, and to suggest ways in which this relevance might be best pursued.

In exploring the model of this project the writer is not making exclusive claims about it. Others models would indeed be possible and relevant. However, by focusing upon a single model, the writer's implicit methodology should become more explicit. After designing and implementing the model there were four lessons learned that needed

to be addressed in this project. Anyone who engages in a similar project should take these concerns into consideration.

The First Lesson

The first and most profound lesson learned had to do with the context associates and the participants gaining knowledge concerning the church's role and responsibility to the community and becoming skilled at organizing community programs in the neighborhood. Therefore, through the course of this project the writer discovered that the participants' perceived apathetic attitude and outlook toward the local community were in fact not precise.

The Second Lesson

This project was not just a project. It was a wake-up call to action, a holy disturbance for participants to move out of their comfort zones. The writer is convinced that one of the reasons that small congregations tend not to thrive today is that they are not clear about their purpose, mission, and the vision of the church. The writer learned the value of being a visionary leader: to be reasonably clear about the vision, purpose, and mission about why the church is here and what the church is for. The participants were beginning to discern the will of God for their lives and the life of the church.

The Third Lesson

The congregation was in dire need of strong pastoral leadership. The congregation wanted a pastor who is a leader. A leader helps a congregation to identify its problems and obstacles and rally the congregation to take on those challenges. The context

associates expressed that the church really doesn't need another part-time pastor who provides religious services just on Sunday morning or a part-time pastor who will officiate weddings and funerals and show up for church anniversaries or other events in the church. We need a pastor as a leader that will challenge our values, beliefs and habits, and tell people what they need to hear and not what they want to hear. Our congregation needs a pastor who will play a visible role in the community, the city, and in city hall.

The Fourth Lesson

The congregation was ready to, as author Kennon L. Callahan says, "live a theology of service, not a theology of survival, a theology of mission, not a theology of maintenance."¹ The writer was encouraged to learn that the participants were ready to become a warm and welcoming congregation, to share deeply with those in need in the spirit of community and belonging.

Summary of the Model

The writer would categorize this project as an enormous achievement. Along this journey of discovery, the writer acquired beneficial information and insight. The writer's hypothesis is that Prophetic Preaching Is A Catalyst For Developing Community-Focused Churches Mobilizing Ministries In The Community.

This project has:

- A. Focused the writer to thoroughly think through the meaning of prophetic preaching.
- B. Given the writer a comprehensible discernment between the relationship of prophetic preaching and a call to action.

¹Kennon L. Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths And Health For Your Congregation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 32.

- C. Given the writer a healthier awareness of parishioners' perception of preaching.
- D. Given the writer an enhanced appreciation of research and a better understanding of research methods.

Recommendations for Further Study

For someone faced with a similar situation, i.e. changing a congregation from being inwardly focused to community-focused, this model will serve as a useful tool and starting point for changing the mindset from apathy to action. The following are additional recommendations for further study:

- A. The four-week Bible Study Series "Apathy To Action" consisted primarily of adults, with only 5 percent of the participants being between the ages of nineteen – thirty-four years old. With that being said, their input regarding the current state of the church in light of the community would have added tremendous value to this project. It is essential to know how the youth and young adults feel therefore, for future study; the writer recommends a higher percentage of youth participation in the project.
- B. To enhance this project, another recommendation would have been to select a small focus group, consisting of residents from the community at large. The writer drafted and distributed a letter/flyer informing and inviting the residents to attend an informative meeting concerning how the church could re-establish a relationship with the Parole community. Regrettably, no one from the community attended the meeting.
- C. The final recommendation that would have strengthened this project was to conduct a town hall meeting with the residents of the community to get their input/feedback on outreach programs and ministries the church could provide to support their needs and interests.

CONCLUSION

This Doctor of Ministry Project has been a very meaningful and rewarding journey. Its goal was to prompt an attitudinal change with the congregation in order to invest themselves in outreach missions and ministries in the Parole community. For years the Cecil Memorial UMC has been a tradition-bound and inwardly focused congregation.

Through much prayer, hard work, and diligence, something astounding and beyond belief is happening today at Cecil Memorial UMC. After a long slumber, the congregation is reawakening to its purpose in the Parole community. The purpose of the church has been displaced, but now the purpose to mobilize ministries in the local community has become rewarding not only to the leaders of the church but to the members as well.

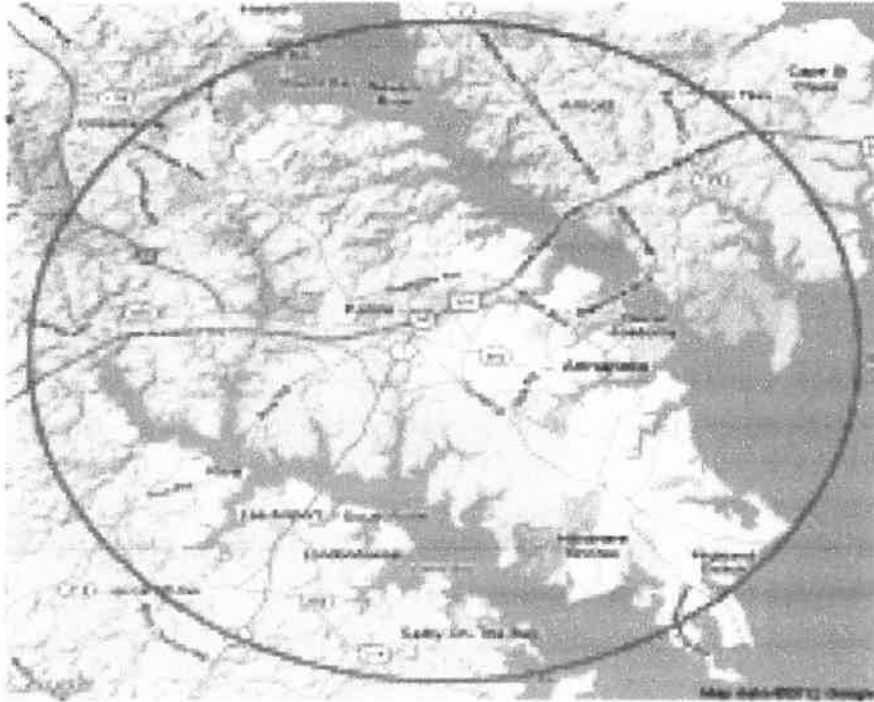
The writer was tremendously pleased with the response of the congregation when they took bold steps into the Parole community. It is the writer's belief that the hypothesis of this research project has been successfully proven. This project was the first opportunity for many parishioners to be actively involved in the Parole community beyond coming to worship. At the conclusion of the project, former passive church members had gained a new vision and energy for the use of their God-given gifts and talents. A renewed partnership and friendship with the Parole community had been re-established.

The congregation has now networked and formed partnerships throughout the Parole community. The congregation realized that they needed to be out in the Parole community, connecting with people in the community through acts of amazing love while connecting them to a God of amazing grace. Through prophetic preaching and prophetic witnessing, selfless demonstrations of love and helpful acts of service were provided to the Parole community. Consequently, as it relates to the design of this project, the surface has merely been scratched. Thus the writer plans to conduct further research that will delve deeper into this subject matter and explore it from angles not examined in this project.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE CITY OF ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

Prepared for: Baltimore-Washington Conference UMC
Study Area: 5 mile radius - 15 Parole St Annapolis MD 21402
Base State: MD
Current Year: 2011
5 Year Projection: 2016
Date: 1/31/2012
Semi-Annual Projection: Fall
Study Area



APPENDIX B

PRE/POST-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

“Apathy to Action”**Preliminary and Post Survey Questionnaire**

Please circle the answer that speaks best about your feelings to the statement.

1. Prophetic preaching is a call to action.
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
2. The focus of many churches has shifted from prophetic witness to “getting your own praise on.”
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
3. Many pulpits and the pews are being lured into the “prosperity gospel”
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree

4. It's easy to get stuck in the religious habit of just going to church.
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
5. To be a Christian is to be empowered and to empower others.
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
6. When the church changes the way it does ministry, our image in the community will change.
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree
7. We are God's "sent-out ones" into the world to serve others.
 - A. Agree
 - B. Strongly Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree

8. Thriving churches pour themselves into serving people in their local community.

- A. Agree
- B. Strongly Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

9. If people do not resemble us or share the same faith, they are still our neighbors in need of assistance.

- A. Agree
- B. Strongly Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

10. The mission of the church is to teach people how to develop their internal and external resources.

- A. Agree
- B. Strongly Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX C
LETTER OF MEMBER PARTICIPATION

September 12, 2011

To the Saints of Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church

Dear Members,

Greeting in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is my earnest prayer that this letter finds both you and your family in the best of both spiritual and physical health. This letter is a formal request for your participation and acknowledgement of your prayers and support as your pastor pursues his Doctorate of Ministry (D.Min.) degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

My D.Min. Project Focus is *“Apathy To Action: Prophetic Preaching A Catalyst To Developing Community-Focused Churches Mobilizing Ministries In The Community.”* During the entire month of October and the first week of November (October 12, 2011 – November 2, 2011), each Wednesday Evening Bible Class at 7:00 p.m., I will be speaking and teaching on the mandate, mission, ministry and methodology of the church to the local community. For the overall success of this project I will need (approximately 30 members) of varying ages, education, marital status, and tenure at the church to participate with me in this project.

No particular skill set is needed or required, other than your faithful attendance for the next four (4) weeks and your honest comments and feed-forward about the Bible Lessons and Sermon Series. The study will begin with an Project Overview and Project Course Syllabus on Wednesday, October 5, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Your consideration and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Rev. Reginald Tarpley, MSOL, M.DIV.

APPENDIX D

BIBLE STUDY CONTEXT ASSOCIATES OBSERVATION FORM

**Bible Study Context Associates
Observation Form**

***“Apathy To Action: Prophetic Preaching A Catalyst For
Developing Community-Focused Churches
Mobilizing Ministries In The Community”***

***Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church
15 Parole Street, Annapolis, Md. 21401***

Rev. Reginald Tarpley

Please provide feedback and observations on the following:

1. Lesson Reflections:
2. Lessons Learned:
3. Lesson Modifications or Suggestions (for next session):
4. Areas of Strength:
5. Areas for Improvement:

APPENDIX E

PROJECT COURSE SYLLABUS

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
D.MIN. PROJECT-PROPHETIC PREACHING

Wednesday Evenings (7:00-8:00 P.M.)

PROJECT COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Reverend Reginald Tarpley

Email: pastor.tarpley@gmail.com

PROJECT TOPIC

“Apathy to Action: Prophetic Preaching a Catalyst for Developing Community-Focused Churches Mobilizing Ministries in the Community.”

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project is a basic study of the fundamentals of prophetic preaching. Prophetic preaching points out those false gods of comfort and convenience. It reminds people of faith that we live in community with one another and with that community comes mutual responsibility and accountability.¹

Prophetic preaching never allows the community of faith to believe that participation in the rituals of religious life (worship) can ever be an adequate substitute for that form of ministry that is designed to uplift the “least of these” in our world.²

¹Marvin A. McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets GONE? : Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching In America* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 46.

²Ibid., 3.

Lectures, discussions, audiovisual presentations, and workshops will comprise the 4 week sessions.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to re-establish the perceived disconnect between the Church and the community, which has greatly affected both institutions. This endeavor is a call to action. It seeks to provide a model for how congregations can take action and meet the needs and interests of people in their community.

This project is focused on the context of Cecil Memorial United Methodist Church, in Annapolis, Maryland. The Church has become primarily a commuter-congregation, with minimal involvement in the life of the community. There appears to be a lack of a concrete and coordinated plan of action on behalf of the Church because of a perceived lack of interest and involvement.

Arguably, the Black Church is one of the most spirit-supporting communities for black life and for the potential spiritual and social transformation.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The researcher's chief concern is the derailment of the Black Church from its traditional prophetic role and challenges it to return to that role. This project devotes special attention to the historical social activism movement of the Black Church and utilizing the social gospel movement, Black Theology and its theological implications.

These theological implications come as a result of two critical figures, Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Martin L. King. It identifies one aspects of that implication as prophetic.

The prophetic implication implies its social justice and socially transforming aspects. Employing qualitative research and pre- and post-surveys, a praxis model will be developed to engage the church and community that will lead to spiritual and social transformation.

PROJECT REQUIREMENT

- 1) Faithful and prompt attendance to all (4) four sessions is required.
- 2) Participants will complete the following handouts:
 - a) Project Participants' Background Information.
 - b) Pre-Survey Questionnaire.
 - c) Post-Survey Questionnaire.
- 3) Participants are expected to actively participate in class discussions.
- 4) Participants will be expected to watch, listen, and evaluate one (1) televangelist to distinguish between Prophetic Preaching and Prosperity (Gospel) Preaching. Televangelists such as: Creflo Dollar, Fred Price, Benny Hinn, Paula White, Joel Osteen, Eddie Long, Leroy Thompson, T. D. Jakes, etc.)

TEXTBOOKS

- Carruthers, Iva E., Haynes III, Frederick D., and Wright Jr., Jeremiah A., *Blow the Trumpet in Zion: Global Vision and Action for the 21st Century Black Church*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. A collection of essays and lectures from various African American scholars, pastors and practitioners focused on the prophetic role of the Black Church in contemporary America.
- Evans, Christopher, ed., *The Social Gospel Today*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. The social gospel has been making an impact on churches and individuals for almost a century. This book is a call to allow the social gospel to speak to our current context. It is a call to encounter the social gospel again. The social gospel represents "the application of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the total message of Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions.

McMickle, Marvin A., *Where Have All the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006. A challenge to the perceived departure from the social gospel and liberation tradition of the Black Church, this volume presents a corrective by revisiting the biblical tradition of justice and liberation from the prophets to Jesus.

SESSIONS SCHEDULE

Week 1-Our Mandate: Amos 5: 21-22

Week 2-Our Mission: Amos 5: 23-24

Week 3-Our Ministry: Mark 6: 30-37

Week 4-Our Methodology: Mark 6: 37-44

APPENDIX F

SERMON SERIES OUTLINES

- I. Sermon Theme:** *“What Will It Take To Stir ‘U’ Up?”*
- II. Subtitle:** *From Apathy To Action: “Lukewarm Preachers”*
- III. Scripture Text:** Amos 5: 21-22
- IV. Introduction:**

The ministry of Amos, no less than that of John the Baptist (Matt. 21: 25-26), was not “from men” but “from heaven,” he was a fearless character.¹ Above all, though Amos was a prophet. The dark days in which he lived called for a man of sturdy moral fiber and fearlessness. His resilient character was molded in the harsh terrain of the wilderness of Tekoa, enabled him to stand before the priest, and the people, proclaiming the word God had given him.²

V. Main Points: *“Our ‘Mandate’ As A Church To The Local Community”*

A. Our ‘Mandate’ Is Not Centered On A “Physical Entity.”

- I. Verse 21:** I cannot stand your religious meetings; I’m fed up with your conferences and conventions.

B. Our ‘Mandate’ Is Not Centered On A “Optical Expression.”

- II. Verse 22a:** I want nothing to do with your religious projects; your pretentious slogans and goals.

C. Our ‘Mandate’ Is Not Centered On A “Financial Endorsement.”

- III. Verse 22b:** I am sick of your fund-raising schemes; your public relations and self-image making.

VI. Conclusion:

The routine ceremonial of worship ritual was meaningless because the people lacked the love, compassion and humble obedience for God that marks a sincere profession of faith. God is interested in their hearts, in their relationships with others, not in their ritual sacrifices. Every aspect of their ritual worship was a direct act of disobedience because it ignored the heart of the law; love for God and concern for others.

¹Richard S. Cripps, *A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Great Britain: S.P.C.K, 1955), 9.

²*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 7* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1985), 275.

VII. Sermon Theme: *“What Will It Take To Stir ‘U’ Up?”*

VIII. Subtitle: *From Apathy To Action: “Lukewarm Parishioners”*

IX. Scripture Text: Amos 5: 23-24

X. Introduction:

It should be noted that the preacher is not solely responsible for the *“apathetic attitudes”* in the church. In many Black Churches across our land, there is *‘fire’* in the pulpit but a *‘frost’* in the pew.³

XI. Main Points: *“Our ‘Mission’ As A Church To The Local Community”*

D. Our ‘Mission’ Focuses On Purposeful Ministry.

IV. Verse 23a: Take away from me the noise of your songs.

E. Our ‘Mission’ Factors In The Pains Of The Master.

V. Verse 23b: I will not hear the melody of the viols.

F. Our ‘Mission’ Fuels Our Passion For Our Fellow Man.

VI. Verse 24: Let justice and judgment run down like a mighty stream.

IV. Conclusion:

Throughout this prophetic book, Amos exposes the inadequate of faith of people who focus on loving God but forget about and fail to love their fellow man. Amos clearly saw the treatment of the poor in Israel as a fundamental rejection of the relationship that Yahweh had established with Israel, which required obedience not only in worship but also to maintain an impartial, fair, and just society.

How much does the church today need to learn this lesson? How many worshipers attend “solemn worship assemblies,” falsely believing that their ritual and routine attendance pleases God? Now, as it was then, God desires not just our attendance, but our hearts.

³George O. McCalap, Jr., *Sin In The House: TEN Crucial Church Problems with Cleansing Solutions* (Lithonia, GA: Orman Press, 2000), 197.

XII. Sermon Theme: *“What Will It Take To Stir ‘U’ Up?”*

XIII. Subtitle: *From Apathy To Action: “Lukewarm Prophetic Witness”*

XIV. Scripture Text: Matthew 6: 30-37

XV. Introduction:

It’s said you will only be remembered for one of two things: the problems you solve or the ones you create. The questions the writer pose are: “What will the Black Church be remembered for in our contemporary society?” ; “Closing their eyes to society’s ills?” ; or “For reaching down in order to uplift society?”

In order for the Black Church to be remembered for the problems they solved, it must re-establish its place as a full-service utility that connection the work of God with the work of the community. Therefore, the question becomes, what can the Black Church do to re-establish its identity as a safe haven and a beacon of hope for the community?

XVI. Main Points: “Our *‘Ministry’* As A Church To The Local Community”

G. Our *‘Ministry’* Is A Ministry That *Connects*.

VII. Verse 33: They ran out together out of the city.

H. Our *‘Ministry’* Is A Ministry That Is *Compassionate*.

VIII. Verse 34. Jesus was moved by compassion.

I. Our *‘Ministry’* Is A Ministry That *Contributes*.

IX. Verse 37: *“You give them something to eat.”*

IV. Conclusion:

Given the darkness, the lateness of the hour and the number of people, it seems acceptable to the disciples to do nothing and allow the situation escalate into a crisis. Rather than relieving the crisis, Jesus intensifies it: “You give them something to eat,” he orders. The disciples complain about what they lack, Jesus focuses on what they possess.

The problem will not be resolved by something beyond them but by something from within them. Jesus sees possibilities where his disciples see only impossibilities, for God can multiply even the smallest gifts if they are made available to him. The story challenges the church not to be overwhelmed by fear, but to trust in the power of God to provide.

XVII. Sermon Theme: *“What Will It Take To Stir ‘U’ Up?”*

XVIII. Subtitle: *From Apathy To Action: “Lukewarm Praise”*

XIX. Scripture Text: Matthew 6: 37-44

XX. Introduction:

The Black Church must rediscover the power of meaningful praise. When our praise is genuine it will not only bless us as a congregation, but more importantly, it will have a positive effect on how we treat others in the local community.

XXI. Main Points: *“Our ‘Methodology’ As A Church To The Local Community”*

J. Our ‘Method’ To Reach Our Community Is Through The *Word*.

X. Verse 38-40: They were feed...

K. Our ‘Method’ To Reach Our Community Is Through *Worship*.

XI. Verse 41a. He looked up towards heaven and blessed the food...

L. Our ‘Method’ To Reach Our Community Is Through *Witnessing*.

XII. Verse 41b-44: They passed the food to others...

IV. Conclusion:

The Black Church must return to its first love, the social, compassionate, and liberating gospel of Jesus the Christ. “Prophetic preaching is designed to motivate people to move beyond lifting up holy hands and begin to extend helping hands to those Jesus describes in Matthew 25 as “the least of these.”⁴

⁴Marvin A. McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, 85.

APPENDIX G

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND/INFORMATION FORM

"APATHY TO ACTION"**PROJECT PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. What is your age group?

_____ 15-18

_____ 19-34

_____ 35-49

_____ 50-64

_____ 65+

2. What is your martial status?

_____ Single

_____ Married

_____ Divorced

_____ Separated

_____ Widowed

3. What is your gender?

_____ Female

_____ Male

4. How many years have you been a member at Cecil Memorial UMC?

_____ 1-5 years

_____ 6-10 years

_____ 11-15 years

_____ 16-20 years

_____ 21-25 years

____ 26-30 years

____ 31+

5. What you is educational level/background?

____ Middle school student

____ High school student

____ High school graduate

____ Community college/trade school graduate

____ College (attended)

____ College (graduate)

____ Professional/Graduate School

6. What is your gross income?

____ \$0 - \$20.000

____ \$20.001 - \$35.000

____ \$35.001 - \$50.000

____ \$50.001 - \$75.000

____ \$75.001 - \$100.000

____ \$100.001 - +

7. What is your political affiliation?

____ Democrat

____ Independent

____ Republican

APPENDIX H

BIBLE STUDY LESSON SERIES OUTLINES

“APATHY TO ACTION”

Bible Study Series—Lesson 1: “*Our Mandate as a Church to the Local Community*”

Drawing Near / Opening Thought

Many people in our churches today profess faith in God, but they embody the values of the dominant culture. These folk believe in God and profess Jesus, but they trust the materialistic values of the secular and dominant culture. Prophetic preaching is a call to action. By pointing out those false gods of comfort and convenience, it seeks to provide a model for how congregations can take action and meet the needs and interests of people in the community.

The Big Picture

Prophetic preaching shifts the focus of a congregation from what is happening to them as a local church to what is happening to them as a part of society.¹ Prophetic preaching then asks the question, “What is the role or the appropriate response of our church, and our denomination to the events that are occurring within our society and throughout the world?”²

Prophetic preaching never allows the community, the people of faith to believe that participation in the rituals of religious life can ever be an adequate substitute for that

¹Marvin A. McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets GONE?: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland: ThePilgrim Press, 2006), 2.

²*Ibid.*, 2.

form of ministry that is designed to build a relationship and uplift “the least of these” in our world.³

Background of the Passage

Amos is one of the twelve who have been called “The Minor Prophets.” The word “*Amos*” by derivation might mean “Burden-bearer.” Amos is great because he shared with Hosea the distinction of being one of the only two such prophets who preached in the Northern Kingdom.

The nation was divided very sharply into upper and lower classes. Amos is often referred to as the prophet of social justice. He was also the prophet who pronounced judgment and annihilation on those with no pity for the numberless masses of people reduced to servitude in their own land.⁴ Amos came forth as a champion of civic and commercial righteousness, in general, the duty of man to his fellow man. Amos went farther than considering oppression and injustice to be breaches of a law.

Going Deeper / Exploration (*Amos 5: 21-22*)

- **5: 21. “*I hate, I despise your festivals.*”** Implies total rejection and opposition. (*Lev. 26: 31*). (***Your feast***) does not connote feasts in general, but the three major feasts designated by the term: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of booths (*Exod 23: 14-17; 34: 22-25; Deut 16: 9-17*).
- **“*I take no pleasure in.*” “*Take pleasures*”** has as its basic sense to smell. The burning sacrifice. God wants no part of their holy days, of their offerings, or even of their hymns of praise. ***God wants justice and righteousness.***
- **5: 22.** What are the objects of these harsh divine responses? It is the entire range of Israel’s liturgical and devotional practice (***worship***) that draws such

³Ibid.

⁴Megan McKenna, *Prophets, Words of Fire* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 64.

displeasure. Amos seems to single out for particular condemnation their sacrifices and offerings. The Lord has stated that He “*reject with utter hatred.*”

Reaction Questions

The following Reaction Questions are proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants.

1. Is God interested in our relationships with others or just our sacrifices? Read Matthew 5: 23-26.
2. What steps can you take to practice true Christianity through your words, your ways, your walk, and your worship?
3. Why is it important to help others? How is helping others part of our Christian faith? List ways you can reach out to someone in need in your immediate circle.

“APATHY TO ACTION”

Bible Study Series—Lesson 2: “Our Mission as a Church to the Local Community”

Drawing Near / Opening Thought

The message for Jesus’ followers is clear. The leader of the Christian movement defined the parameters of our mission in his inaugural address (*message*) at Nazareth.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.
(Luke 4: 18-19, quoting from Isaiah 61: 1-2)⁵

Jesus has already given us the action items that will be measures of evaluation on God’s final exam.

I was hungry and you gave me something to eat...thirsty and you gave me something to drink...a stranger and you invited me in, I needed cloths and you clothed me...sick and you looked after me...in prison and you came to visit me...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (Matthew 25: 35-40)⁶

The Big Picture

The mission of the church should coincide with the gospel. All missions should be biblically based. The church’s mission is to preach and teach the gospel in a dying world *but feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help heal the sick, visit the prisoners, and empower*

⁵Mike Slaughter, *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission Of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), xiii.

⁶Ibid., xiii-xiv.

people in Christ. Jesus' mission to the poor, sick, afflicted, hungry, and oppressed is a mission model worthy of emulation.⁷

Prophetic preaching never allows the community, the people of faith to believe that participation in the rituals of religious life can ever be an adequate substitute for that form of ministry that is designed to build a relationship and uplift "the least of these" in our world.⁸

Background of the Passage

The words of Amos, an eighth century B.C.E. prophet comes to mind. Amos condemned Israel because the nation seemed more interested in the acts of animal's sacrifice and the observance of religious feast days than in the poverty and economic exploitation that impacted the lives of so many poor and oppressed people in their society.

Going Deeper / Exploration (Amos 5: 23-24)

- 5: 23. *Now Yahweh will neither look at (v 22) nor listen to His people's worship.* Amos announced that Yahweh hated and despised the sacrifices and offerings as well as the cultic feasts with their songs and music.
- 5: 24. This is the climax of this passage and one of the best-known lines in all prophetic literature. Its images are powerful. What Yahweh truly desires is justice and righteousness. Sacrifices and other elements of worship (vv 22, 23) constituted occasional righteousness and were rejected because proper living in general did not complement them. *"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."* One of Amos vigorous use of imagery. Many of the oases in Israel are dry most of the year and when it rains

⁷Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *Reclaiming What Was Lost: Recovering Spiritual Vitality in the Mainline Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 84.

⁸Marvin A. McMickle, *Where Have All The Prophets GONE?: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland: ThePilgrim Press, 2006), 3

they are subject to flash flooding. Justice should be like the constant streams whose life-giving water can be depended on every day of the year.

Reaction Questions

The following Reaction Questions are proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants:

1. Does the definition of justice in the 21st century begin and end with just these two issues: abortion and human sexuality (same-sex marriage)?
2. How would the Prophet Amos define “Church- ianity” vs. “Christianity?”
3. What are some places where Jesus’ followers can venture into uncomfortable places to act in love for people they’ve never met?

“APATHY TO ACTION”

Bible Study Series – Lesson 3: “*Our Mandate as a Church to the Local Community*”

Drawing Near / Opening Thought

Going beyond the four walls of the church is extremely important in helping others in need. John Wesley said it best when he exclaimed, “The world is my parish.” The church must develop holy boldness to travel to every part of the world to witness for Christ and to help others in need. In this sense, our focus should be “*Christianity*” rather than “*Church-ianity*.”⁹

The story of the social gospel is one of the most distinctive chapters in the American experience. The social gospel sought to show the relevance of Christian principles to the affairs of persons in the world. Always more than a traditional religious movement, the social gospel stepped outside the churches to intersect the political, social, and economic forces of changing America.¹⁰ There is a strong emphasis on the ethical, morals, and values – on the greater good for humankind – especially the achievement of *the Kingdom of God on earth*.

The Big Picture

The Four Domains of Being Compassionate Like Jesus

Being Compassionate like Jesus involves the alignment of Christian domains: *heart, head, hands, and habits*. The *internal domains*– the motivations of your *heart*

⁹Iva E. Carruthers, Frederick D. Haynes, III, and Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., *Blow The Trumpet In Zion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 76-78.

¹⁰Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 5-6.

and the Christian perspective of your *head* are things you keep inside or even disguise if it suits your purpose. The *external domains*—your public Christ-like behavior, or *hands*, and your *habits* as experience by others – will determine largely whether people will respect you.¹¹

Background of the Passage

In our scripture lesson, Mark 6: 30 – 44, the disciples faced the challenge of feeding the massive crowd of people who had come to listen to Jesus. They thought, “*Too many people and too little food.*” However, *the disciple’s real problem was not a lack of food, but a lack of vision.* They reverted (*to turn back to a former condition*) to “disciples” and not “apostles” in Mark 6: 7-13 vs. 6:35.

Going Deeper / Exploration (Mark 6: 30-37)

Theological Theme: *Compassion*

V 34. “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.”

The Greek word for “compassion” *splangnizesthai*, is used in the NT only of Jesus, and here his compassion is expressed in “teaching them many things.”¹² The comparison evokes a well-established metaphor. Kings already described themselves as shepherds of their people, and in the OT and later Jewish literature both God and human leaders are pictured as shepherds who lead and care for their flock.

¹¹Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons From The Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Times* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 31-35.

¹²*Ibid.*, 191.

Jesus did not follow the usual human inclinations, and although He was exhausted and in great need of rest, He was drawn to them because He *felt compassion for them*.

The Greek word for “*compassion*” means literally to be moved in one’s bowels.

Jesus was not remote or coldly calculating and analytical concerning men’s needs but was deeply moved by the suffering, confusion, despair, and lack of spirituality of those around Him. Jesus felt pain, experiencing genuine anguish for the suffering of others, whether they were believers or unbeliever, Jew or Gentile, man or woman, young or old, wealthy or poor.

- Mark 1: 39 – 44 (v. 41); 5: 1-19; 8: 1-9; 9: 17-29.

Reaction Questions

The following Reaction Questions are proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants.

1. Is there a difference between being concerned and being compassionate? If so, what is the difference?
2. What acts of human suffering move you towards being compassionate?
3. Do you believe there is a lack of compassion in the Lord’s church today because members often “pick and choose” what they will and will not be compassionate about?

“APATHY TO ACTION”

Bible Study Series – Lesson 4: *“Our Methodology as a Church to the Local Community.”*

Drawing Near / Opening Thought

Regardless of the imperfections, defects, and deficiencies of the black church, it still merit attention and remains the most important social institution in the black community. Interestingly enough, author Michael Battle boldly and rightly contends that, the gift that the Black Church gives to the world is in its belief and practice that when any person is mistreated or disadvantaged, an incident of supreme importance has occurred, and something sacred violated.¹³

The Big Picture

SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN THE EARLY BLACK CHURCH

The nature of the Black Church is complex and diverse, comprised of African Christian spirituality that emphasizes communal practices of relationally. This is the message coursing through Henry H. Mitchell’s painstaking and probing treatment of the *Black Church: The Long Hidden Realities of the First Years Beginnings*. Mitchell reminds us that the early Black Church viewed all civic responsibilities as an obligation of Christian service. He concludes, the most apparent evidence of the early Black

¹³Michael Battle, *The Black Church in American* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 44.

Church's concern for its people in shackles has been seen in the name anti-slavery or abolitionist movement.¹⁴ Mitchell states the following:

Virtually every Black Church pulpit was an anti-slavery or abolitionist platform. Every preacher as well as gifted laity and orators were committed to the cause of social activism. Mitchell noted, among the powerfully gifted laity enlisted in the abolitionist cause, and well-known in history were Frances E. W. Harper, Sarah and her brother Charles L. Remond, Lunsford Lane, and William Well Brown. Most noted of all, along with Frederick Douglass, were Sojourner Truth, ex-slave and stinging orator. Douglass, best known as an abolitionist orator and publisher, was licensed as a local preacher in the A.M.E Zion Church.¹⁵

SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN THE BLACK CHURCH DURING EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Andrew Billingsley work entitled, "*Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African American Families*" does an admirable job of discussing the early Black Church in America was not primarily a religious institution in the same way as the white churches. He points out that community service was an important element of black religious expression from the beginning. With this thought in mind, Billingsley makes the following confession:

It represented freedom, independence, and respect for leadership, as well as the opportunity for self-esteem, self-development, leadership, and relaxation. Moreover, they found that the black church was a

¹⁴Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 130.

¹⁵Ibid., 130.

community center and recreational center that encouraged education, vocational training, and democratic fellowship beyond its members.¹⁶

SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN THE BLACK CHURCH DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The civil rights movement helped the black church regain some loyalty and respect. When the civil rights movement changed the segregation laws and landscape of the land, the black church stood at the center of this social change. In his 1963 book, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Martin Luther King Jr. wonders how white Christians could build churches that were so beautiful to behold and then practice something as ugly as racial segregation with those same structures. Dr. King writes:

“Those churches, however, were not focused on what was the central social issue of that generation. In fact, the people in those churches were the primary reason why racism, segregation, and the rule of law known as Jim Crow could last as long as it did in America.”¹⁷

SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN THE BLACK CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Reflecting on the meaning of social activism, J. Deotis Roberts identifies the mission of the black church in the 21st century as one of ministering to black families. He identifies two aspects of that ministry as the priestly and the prophetic. Roberts suggests that the priestly ministry of the black church refers to their helping healing, and

¹⁶Andrew Billingsley, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-America Families*. (New York: Simon and Schuster Press, 1992), 352.

¹⁷Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail: Why I Can't Wait*. (New York: Signet Books, 1964), 91.

comforting work. The prophetic ministry involves its social justice and socially transforming aspects.¹⁸

Reaction Questions

The following Reaction Questions are proposed to stimulate fruitful discussion and/or debate among the participants.

1. Does the church today sound like the Black Church during the civil rights era?
Why or why not?
2. What responses are stirred in you after studying Black Church's traditional role of social activism, social justice, and Liberating Theology?
3. Considering the current state of our church, do you feel that it will be relevant or irrelevant in the 21st century?
4. What do you hope and/or wish for our church?

¹⁸Deotis J. Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 110.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aaron Jr., Charles L. *Preaching Hosea, Amos, & Micah*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005.
- A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos. SPCK, 1955.
- Andrews, Dale P. *Practical Theology For Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Andersen, Francis I. and Freedman, David Noel. *The Anchor Yale Bible, Amos*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Anderson, Victor. *Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., Carroll, Jackson W., Dudley, Carl S. and McKinney, William. eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Battle, Michael. *The Black Church in American*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Beilenson, John. *Voices of Struggle and Voices Of Pride*. White Plains, NY: Peter Pauper Press, 5.
- Billingsley, Andrew. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-America Families*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Press, 1992.
- Birch, Bruce C. *Hosea, Joel, and Amos*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Blanchard, Ken and Hodges, Phil. *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons From The Greatest Leadership Role Model Of All Time*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2005.
- Blount, Brian K. *Go Preach! Mark's Kingdom Message and the Black Church Today*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Blount, Brian K. and Charles, Gary W. *Preaching Mark In Two Voices*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

- Boice, James Montgomery. *The Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.
- Boring, M. Eugene and Craddock, Fred B. *The People's New Testament Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Braxton, Brad R. *Preaching Paul*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Journey To The Common Good*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- _____. *The Prophetic Imagination*. 2nd Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001.
- _____. *Mandate To Difference: An Invitation To The Contemporary Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- _____. *The Practice Of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching An Emancipating Word*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2012.
- _____. *The Word Militant: Preaching A Decentering Word*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007.
- _____. *Texts That Linger, Words That Explode: Listening to Prophetic Voices*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Callahan, Kennon L. *Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths And Health For Your Congregation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Campbell, Charles L. *The Word Before The Power: An Ethic Of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Cheshire, Barbara. *The Best Dissertation is...A Finished Dissertation*. Portland, OR: National Book Co., 1993.
- Coggins, Richard James. *The New Century Bible Commentary*. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Cone, James H. *Risks Of Faith: The Emergence Of A Black Theology of Liberation*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999.
- _____. *A Black Theology Of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006.
- Craddock, Fred B. *Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985.

- Cranton, Patricia. *Professional Development As Transformative Learning: New Perspectives For Teachers Of Adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009.
- Davies, Richard E. *Handbook For Doctor Of Ministry Projects: An Approach To Structured Observation Of Ministry*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984.
- Davis, Reginald F. *The Black Church: Relevant Or Irrelevant In The 21st Century?* Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys Publishing, 2010.
- Degler, Carl. *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1950. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Son, Inc., 2002.
- Dudley, Carl S and Ammerman, Nancy T. *Congregation In Transition: A Guide For Analyzing, Assessing, And Adapting In Changing Communities*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Son, Inc., 2002.
- Dudley, Carl S. *Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry: Guidelines and Models In Action*. The Alban Institute, 1991.
- Easum, Bill. *Preaching For Church Transformation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010.
- Eddy, Sherwood. *The Kingdom of God and the American Dream* New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1941.
- Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.
- Eslinger, Richard L. *The Web Of Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Evans Jr., James H. *Black Theology: A Critical Assessment And Annotated Bibliography*.
- Flower, James W. *Stages Of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *The Negro Church in America* / Lincoln, C. Eric. *The Black Church Since Frazier*. New York, NY: Schocken Books Inc. 1974.
- Fischer, David H. *Historians' Fallacies: Toward A Logic of Historical Thought*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1970.

- Gardner, E. Clinton. *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1960.
- Gilbert, Kenyatta R. *The Journey and Promise Of African American Preaching*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Greenwood, Davydd J. and Levin, Morten. *Introduction To Action Research 2nd Edition: Social Research For Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007.
- Guelich, Robert A. *Word Biblical Commentary, Mark 1-8:26, Vol. 34A*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1989.
- Hamilton, Adam. *Leading Beyond The Walls: Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*, 3rd. ed. Boston: Bedford Books, 1995.
- Hardy, Robert T. ed., *The Social Gospel in America: Gladden, Ely, Rauschenbusch*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Hayes, John H. *His Times & His Preaching: Amos The Eighth-Century Prophet*. Nashville, Tn: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets: Vol. 1*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement In The Black Baptist Church 1880-1920*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Hopkins, Charles Howard. *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1940.
- Hopkins, Dwight N. *Heart and Head: Black Theology – Past, Present, and Future*. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002.
- Inbody, Tyron. *The Faith of the Christian Church: An Introduction to Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdmans Pub., 2005.
- Jones, Laurie Beth. *The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement For The Work And For Life*. New York, NY: Hyperion, 1996.
- Kapelrud, Arvid A. *Central Ideas In Amos*. Norway: Oslo University Press, 1961
- Kinnaman, David and Lyons, Gabe. *Unchristian: What A New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007.

- Kornfeld, Margaret Zipse. *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide To Care And Counseling In Faith Community*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2005.
- Krueger, Richard A. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989.
- LaRue, Cleophus J. *The Heart Of Black Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.
- _____. *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Lewis, Robert and Cordeiro, Wayne. *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church From The Inside Out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Lincoln, C. Eric and Mamiya, Lawrence H. *The Black Church in African American Experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Lischer, Richard. *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and The Word That Moved America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Long, Thomas G. *The Witness Of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- Longman III, Tremper and Garland, David E. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 9 Matthew & Mark*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010.
- Lundblad, Barbara K. *Transforming the Stone: Preaching Through Resistance To Change*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Malina, Bruce J. *The Social Gospel of Jesus: The Kingdom of God in Mediterranean Perspective*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001.
- Mann, Thomas. *The Oxford Guide To Library Research: How To Find Reliable Information Online and Offline*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Marcus, Joel. *The Anchor Yale Bible, Mark 1-8, Vol. 27*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
- McComiskey, Thomas. *The Minor Prophets, Vol. 1, Hosea, Joel, and Amos*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992.
- McKenna, Megan. *Prophets Words of Fire*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001.
- McNiff, Jean Pamela Lomax and Whitehead, Jack. *You And Your Action Research Project*. Second Edition. New York, NY: Routledge, Farmer, 2003.

- McMickle, Marvin A. *Where Have All The Prophets Gone: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in American*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2006
- _____. *The Star Book on Preaching*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006.
- _____. *Shaping the Claim*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008.
- _____. *Preaching To The Black Middle Class: Words of Challenge Words of Hope*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000.
- Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christian: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Merida, Tony. *Faithful Preaching*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 240.
- Mezirow, Jack. *Transformative Dimensions Of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991.
- Miller, Calvin. *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2006.
- Miller, William. *Your Golden Shadow: Discovering And Fulfilling Your Underdeveloped Self*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Mitchell, Henry H. *Black Church: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years Beginnings*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2004.
- Mitchem, Stephanie Y. *Name It and Claim It – Prosperity Preaching in the Black Church*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 11.
- Morgan, David L. *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, 1997.
- Myers, William R. *Research in Ministry: Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program*, 3rd Edition. Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 2000, 2002.
- Nelsen, Hart M. and Nelsen, Anne Kusener. *Black Church In The Sixties*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ & Culture*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1951.
- Owen, Thomas C. and Wondra, Ellen K. *Introduction to Theology*. 3rd edition. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002.

- Paris, Peter J. *The Spirituality of African People: The Search For A Common Moral Discourse*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995.
- Perry, Dwight. *Breaking Down Barriers: A Black Evangelical Explains The Black Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.
- Pinn, Anthony B. *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Powery, Emerson B. *Mark: Immersion Bible Studies*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011.
- Proctor, Samuel DeWitt. *The Substance Of Things Hoped For: A Memoir Of African – American Faith*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995.
- _____. *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet: Crafting a Sermon of Authority*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994.
- Rauschenbusch, Walter. *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. New York, NY.: Macmillan, 1917.
- Robinson, Haddon and Larson, Craig Brian. *The Art & Craft Of Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.
- Rodrigues, Dawn. *The Research Paper And The World Wide Web*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1997.
- Roberts, Deotis J. *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980.
- Robinson, Haddon W. *The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages: Biblical Preaching*, 2nd edition Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Robinson, Haddon W. and Robinson Torrey W. *It's All In How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.
- Smith, Gary V. *Amos: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989.
- Stein, Robert H. *Mark – Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2008.
- Stewart III, Carlyle Fielding. *Growing the African American Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006.

- _____. *African – American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- _____. *Reclaiming What Was Lost: Recovering Spiritual Vitality in the Mainline Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Stott, John R. W. *The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century Between Two Worlds*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982.
- Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Exegesis, A Handbook For Students and Pastors, Fourth Edition*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- _____. *Word Biblical Commentary: Vol. 31 Hosea – Jonah*. Waco, TX: Word Book Publisher, 1987.
- Theissen, Gerd and Merz, Annette. *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*. Minneapolis, TX: Fortress Press, 1998.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, Michael D. Coogan, Editor. Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001.
- Tiffany, Frederick C. and Ringe, Sharon H. *Biblical Interpretation: A Road Map*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Thurman, Howard. *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1979.
- Tillich, Paul. *Theology of Culture*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Trimiew, Darryl M. “The Social Gospel Movement and the Question of Race,” in *The Social Gospel Today*, 2nd ed. Christopher H. Evans. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Tisdale, Leonora Tubbs. *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- True To Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.
- The New Interpreter’s Bible. Vol. VII, Introduction To Apocalyptic Literature, Daniel, The Twelve Prophets*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual For Writers Of Term Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations*, 7th Edition.

- Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Your Guide To Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.
- Walker, Wyatt Tee. *Afro-Centrism and Christian Faith*. New York, NY: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1994.
- _____. *Race, Justice and Culture*. New York, NY: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1988.
- Walton, John H. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Washington, James Melvin. *I Have A Dream. Writing & Speeches That Changed The World*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992.
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- Wells, Samuel. *Speaking The Truth: Preaching In A Pluralistic Culture*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.
- West, Cornel. *Hope On A Tightrope*. New York City, NY: Smiley Books, 2008.
- _____. *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982.
- _____. *The Cornel West Reader*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999.
- White Jr., Ronald C. *Liberty And Justice For All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel (1877-1925)*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990.
- Whitehead, James D. and Whitehead, Evelyn Eaton. *Method In Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*. Lanham, MD: Sheed and Ward, 1995.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African American*. 3rd Edition. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Wogaman, J Philip. *Speaking The Truth In Love: Prophetic Preaching To A Broken World*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Woodbey, George Washington. *What to Do and How to Do It, or Socialism vs. Capitalism*, in *Black Socialist Preacher*, ed. Philip S. Foner. San Francisco, CA: Synthesis Publications, 1983.